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THE ART OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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# THE ART OF TEACHING ENGLISH

LECTURES AND PAPERS

BY

J. H. FOWLER



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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TO  
W. W. VAUGHAN  
A TRUE EDUCATOR  
A LOVER OF THE BEST IN LIFE AND LETTERS  
THESE  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF  
LONG FRIENDSHIP AND OLD FRIENDS

## PREFACE

THE first two papers in this volume were originally published as Pamphlets of the English Association (Nos. 5 and 17). They have long been out of print, and have often been enquired for. Three papers (III, VII, X) were read to Conferences on Teaching held at Stratford-on-Avon in 1914, 1915, 1916; one (XIV) was read to the Library Association at its Annual Congress in 1928; one (V) was a lecture delivered at Clifton College in 1911; and the rest are papers written for the *School World*, the *Journal of Education*, and the *Preparatory Schools Review*, reprinted by permission and brought up to date in their references to books.

Taken together, the several papers amount to a reasoned statement of my theory and practice as a schoolmaster in the teaching of English. Since the first paper was written, immense pains have been bestowed upon the subject, many lucubrations have been printed, and a Departmental Committee (on which it was my privilege to serve) has issued a *Report* which has been very widely read. But I do not find that all the dangers against which I ventured in 1908

to warn my fellow-teachers have been avoided, or that the principles which I defended have either been refuted or become obsolete or passed into the region of accepted truisms. I am conscious that in refurbishing old weapons, and stepping down from the shelf of retirement to take part as of old in the fray, I may resemble a little too closely the aged Priam girding on his armour for the last time, to receive scant encouragement even from Hecuba and swift and merciless punishment from Pyrrhus.

*Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis  
Tempus eget.*

Yes, the battle against Philistinism and the Idols of the Market-place and 'the oppositions of Science falsely so called' must be left to younger and fresher combatants. And yet, such is the kindness I have received from younger colleagues and successors, and from many generations of old pupils, that I hope with some courage for a friendly reception for what, to change the metaphor, I may call my pedagogic Last Will and Testament; and especially, perhaps, for the supplementary pages which contain a selection of the Notes on Essays which I wrote for my pupils of the Sixth Form at Clifton, and some of the questions on English Literature which I have set as an examiner on various occasions.

*Quis custodiet custodes?* Mr. T. Mark has very kindly read my proofs and rectified some lapses into ambiguity and incorrectness. In thanking him, I

gladly take the opportunity of acknowledging the debt which I, in common with all who have contributed to or used my 'English Literature Series' during the last five years, owe to the unfailing skill and care with which he has discharged the duties of assistant editor.

J. H. FOWLER.

16 CANYNGE SQUARE,  
CLIFTON, BRISTOL,  
Nov. 1931.



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## I

### ENGLISH LITERATURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS <sup>1</sup>

THE present moment—with its inauguration under happy auspices of an association for the study of the English language and literature, with its awakening, as is indicated by an unprecedented number of reprints of the English classics, of a widespread interest in these things among the masses of our countrymen, with its awakening also of a new consciousness among the scattered members of the English family all over the world of the bonds that draw them together—the present moment, I say, seems to mark the second opportunity presented to our English schools for repairing their long neglect of our national literature. The first opportunity was given about thirty-eight years ago, when, concurrently with the establishment of elementary education upon a national basis, there was a great revival of secondary schools going on throughout the country, whilst the attacks made on the traditional classical curriculum of the older schools were resulting in the widening of that curriculum, and in the institution of modern sides. If the second opportunity presented to us now is neither to be missed nor misused, it is important to understand why so little came of the first.

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the members of the English Association at the Second Annual General Meeting, January 11, 1908.

I think we may sum up the causes of failure as follows. (1) Those to whom it fell to give teaching in English were without guidance as to the methods most appropriate to the subject. Many of the great schools, no doubt—and some of the smaller schools also—were fortunate enough to possess one or two men whose keen interest and high attainment in this subject, combined with vigorous individuality, rendered them independent of assistance, and enabled them to strike out methods for themselves, and to give lessons of an inspiring quality that their successors may well admire and imitate, but cannot hope to excel. But the average teacher, it will be admitted, was prone to fall back upon the methods of the classical curriculum in which he had been trained, or to look for guidance to the annotated edition that was given him to use, or to the examination by which his teaching was tested.

(2) The annotated editions of English classics were themselves modelled upon classical commentaries, and directed attention to linguistic, archaeological, historical, or geographical points, whilst neglecting, as a rule, the consideration of the author's style and method, his aim and achievement. This concentration upon the letter of the text, to the neglect of what is far more essential and far more truly educative—the study of the author's meaning, the realization of the man and his audience—has not been a defect of our teaching of English literature alone. It has been the worst defect of a large part of classical teaching too. Indeed I sometimes think that the antagonism which too often exists between the supporters of a classical training and the advocates of English study would disappear

if both the one side and the other cared less for the language and more for the vital elements of literature, that sanity of true genius, that seeing of life steadily and seeing it whole, which is after all the main reason for the enduring importance alike of Sophocles and of Shakespeare.

(3) I think that our distinguished chairman,<sup>1</sup> whose own practice and example have done so much to fix the attention of all of us upon these more vital elements of literature, will forgive me if I find another cause of failure in the tendency of the first professors of English literature, when it was at last admitted to the rank of a university subject, to emphasize the study of the historical origins of our language and the Anglo-Saxon sources of our older literature. No true scholar would wish to depreciate the value of those two studies, or to minimize the debt that we owe to the men who have given up their lives to the furtherance of them. Yet it cannot be said that their methods, which have so largely determined the type of examination-paper common during the last forty years, point out the best path by which the average Englishman may attain to such an understanding and love of his national literature as is to be desired for him. Indeed, if we cannot come to the literature straight, it is better to approach it by the old road of the classics. It is far more vital to have some knowledge of the great world-stream of literature, of Homer and Virgil, as a preparation for the understanding of the best English classics, than to be learned in early and middle English.

(4) Lastly, the English examination-system, with its baneful tendency to set the highest value upon results

<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh.



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that can most easily be assessed in marks, has injuriously influenced the teaching of English literature as of other things.

I have no wish to exaggerate what I have called the failure of our teaching in this subject. I think there is some exaggeration in current criticism ; that outside critics of the public schools in particular, like Sir Oliver Lodge, have very little idea of the splendid quality of much of the English teaching given there. The lack of intellectual interest, with which they so freely charge us, is mainly due, I imagine, neither to masters nor methods nor subjects, but (I should not venture to say it if it had not been said by better men before me) to the deep-seated Philistinism of the English nation, of the upper classes as much as of the lower, to the anti-intellectual influence of the homes from which our boys come, and the anti-intellectual tradition that is stronger than the influence of any master. Yet I freely confess that the hopeful signs which I have already mentioned as marking the present moment, are not due to anything that the schools have done for English literature. If I ask myself what has kept the love of literature alive in the nation during the last forty years, I am constrained to answer : Not, in any great degree, the schools. I should assign the main part of the credit to the direct influence of the great Victorian writers, Carlyle and Ruskin especially, upon their readers ; a part to the missionary work of the professors of English literature in our universities and provincial colleges, and to university extension lecturers ; a part to the influence of the best kinds of journalism ; a part to the enlightened enterprise of the publishers and editors to whom we

owe reprints like 'The Temple Classics'; and perhaps the least part of all to the schools.

Well, once again the opportunity is presented to us; and our presence here to-day is a token that we are anxious to make the best use of it. I do not think we shall fall into precisely the mistakes that were fallen into before. For one thing, the tyranny of the annotated edition is greatly less than it was. Moreover, in the annotated editions themselves and in other printed aids to the teaching of English literature there is far greater choice available than there was even a few years ago; and if the newer editions too often fall below the old in solidity of learning, they show, on the whole, greater appreciation of the needs of the beginner. Again, if we have not escaped from the tyranny of examinations, the requirements of the chief examining bodies in England, and the types of paper set by them, have undergone very sensible modification in the right direction during the last few years. Whilst, therefore, I have thought the old dangers still so far real that it seemed worth while to recall them to you to-day, I incline to think there are other dangers, some of them born of a natural reaction against the old, against which it is even more necessary to be on our guard.

First among these I would place the danger of substituting for the old-fashioned study of a too restricted number of books read at a painfully slow pace a mere hazy impression of the history of literature. Some of those who write on the teaching of this subject, or provide books for the teaching of it, have little idea what an empty thing a generalization is to the mind of a child of fourteen, or even of sixteen or seventeen.



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I was glad to see in that excellent list of books for a Teacher's Reference Library recently issued by our Association the salutary caution appended to its recommendation of Mr. Stopford Brooke's admirable Primer, that it was sometimes put into the hands of children not mature enough to use it. But some of the most recent histories of literature produced for school consumption are very much less suited than his Primer for the schoolroom. Some of them contain generalizations that are not only empty of meaning to the child but somewhat empty of meaning to the adult reader also. Except, possibly, for the very highest forms of a secondary school, the history of literature is not a good subject for schools at all. By all means let us set the authors to whom we introduce our pupils in their proper historical surroundings: we cannot give a true idea of the man and his work without giving also some idea of the age in which he lived, the age that made him or that he helped to make. But I am convinced that we shall err if, instead of teaching literature, we try to teach the history of literature, with or without the help of elegant extracts, which, to use an old simile, are like bricks offered as specimens of houses.

Akin to this first danger, which I call the danger of *impressionism*, is another that I may name the danger of *sentimentalism*. From two points of view I see a danger here. First, much of the literature of the present day is without that reticence which is so impressive a characteristic of the best literature, and there is a real danger that some of us whose love for our subject is quite unaffected may gush about it unwisely. There is no surer way to weary the average

class with literature than to tell them too often to 'mark the pathos.' Let the self-restraint of the great writers be an example to us here. And let us remember only as an awful warning that answer of the popular novelist who accounted for her success by saying, 'I press my soul out upon the white paper.' That operation is a degree worse than to wear the heart upon the sleeve; and one can hardly help the reflection that it must be a pulpy and squashy sort of soul that can be so treated.

But perhaps the most serious peril is that this sentimentalism, without taking the form of positive gush—nay, even whilst protesting to itself that it abhors gush above all things—may induce a revolt against anything like a high standard of accurate and scientific scholarship. I know that there are some lovers of English literature so firmly convinced that anything that is taught in school must be hateful to the pupil that they beg us, for the sake of literature, not to make it a school subject. I do not share their fears. In an experience of teaching of more than twenty years I cannot recall a single case of a distaste for English literature that could fairly be set down to the reaction from school studies. Happily I do know, on the contrary, of many cases where the lesson in English literature has laid the foundation of an enduring pleasure. But many of us have grown terribly afraid of words like 'analysis' and 'paraphrase' because the processes they stand for have been wofully misused in the past. We need to be reminded, I think, that if our study is to justify itself we must prosecute it in a scientific spirit—using it, as it may so well be used, to teach the process of definition, which, as



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Socrates pointed out so long ago, is the basis of sound knowledge, to teach the value of clear thinking, the hatefulness of a slipshod and confused terminology.

The teacher who sets before himself this ideal will not be moved by an outcry that he is making literature hateful by making it a really intellectual exercise. There will always be pupils to whom anything of the nature of intellectual discipline is irksome. The artistic temperament, in particular (which is capable of deriving the intensest enjoyment from literature, and which, therefore, the teacher must try not to alienate), will be naturally averse to restraint. This reflection may go some way to console the schoolmaster for the scant respect which the genius that cannot be defined as 'the transcendent capacity of taking trouble' sometimes shows to his labours. You remember how Byron writes in *Childe Harold* of 'Horace that I hated so,' and finds the cause of his hatred in the dullness of the Harrow pedagogues. But Byron's readers may well reflect that some of the finest passages in *Childe Harold*, the stanzas that express so eloquently the impressiveness of Greece and Rome, owe more than their author knew to those despised lessons; and may reflect further that, if he had been a more tractable pupil, we might have been able to pay his English style a finer compliment than the strange one paid him by Sir Walter Scott—'that he wielded his pen with the negligent ease of a person of quality.'

By way of showing that analytic study need not be fatal to artistic appreciation, I think it may be worth while to mention what I have seen done at Clifton during the last few years with the study of music. To interest the average schoolboy in musical analysis is

surely not an easier thing than to interest him in the analysis of literary forms. Yet I have seen, again and again, an audience of nearly 200 boys voluntarily assembled in their playtime to listen to an analytic lecture on music delivered by way of preparation for an orchestral concert, with the result that, when the concert was eventually given, a large number of boys have followed difficult symphonies with evident and enthusiastic appreciation.<sup>1</sup>

A third danger—not a new one, but liable to be increased, if we do not take care, by the very emphasis that we lay on our own subject—is the danger of *isolation*. I almost shrink from using the word ‘correlation’; it has been so liberally employed of late in educational matters. From the top of a Bristol tram-car the other day I observed in a pork-butcher’s window the legend—‘Sausages, best quality, 7d.; digestive, 6d.’ Well, I am a little afraid that ‘correlation’ in educational matters may have attached to it the significance which the pork-butcher evidently attached to the word ‘digestive’—that it may become a symbol for that which is not of the best quality, for a mixture of doubtful ingredients. But I venture to think that the teaching of English, and even of English literature, will never prosper in schools if it is treated too much as a thing apart and made the concern of specialists. Some of the best possible lessons in English literature are those that are given almost or quite casually in the course of a lesson in a classical or foreign author by the reading of a parallel passage. That principle of the unity of literature, of which I

<sup>1</sup> See *Public Schools and their Music*, by A. H. Peppin (Oxford Press).



have already spoken, applies here. Again, the teaching of English composition should be brought into close relation with the teaching of literature. Few more stimulating subjects for school-essays in the higher forms can be found than a suggested comparison between the modes of treatment employed by two authors in dealing with a similar topic or situation. Once more, I should like to remind those who teach history of the extent to which they can help or hinder the object we have at heart. Is sufficient care being exercised that the text-books of history used in school are written in pure, idiomatic, dignified English? I fancy there has been some falling-off in this respect of late years, and I have noted with dismay that at least one able and much-commended 'Introduction to English History' seeks to conciliate the schoolboy by frankly adopting his own slang. Let us remember that the reading of a history-book is inevitably a lesson in style: the book is read slowly, and its phrases attach themselves to the memory. I think we scarcely make enough use in school, whether for history or literature, of the great historians—Gibbon, Macaulay, Napier, Prescott, Motley, Arnold, and the rest. Even when they are not placed in the hands of pupils, the great scenes and passages from them might with advantage be more frequently read aloud by the teacher.

The last danger I can touch upon is what, for want of a better word, I may be allowed to call *materialism*. In some quarters the cry for more teaching of the mother-tongue is accompanied by a disposition to disparage the higher uses of literature. Professor Armstrong, for example, with whose advocacy of English teaching on the ground of its supreme utility

I cordially sympathize, appears to regard the literary teacher, whose interest lies in the humaner qualities of his subject, as not merely unpractical, but unmanly. I hope that, while we claim for the study of English that it is the best possible preparation for the study of the sciences and for the needs of practical life, we shall refuse to admit that there is anything unpractical or unmanly in valuing literature most for its power to enlighten and to uplift. 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' and the needs of the spirit are not less urgent than the needs of the body. Remembering with Wordsworth that 'poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge'—believing with Shelley that 'the great instrument of moral good is the imagination, and poetry administers to the effect by acting on the cause'—we shall be content in our teaching with no aim short of the highest.

I have spoken of failures in the past and of dangers in the present, but I trust I have made it clear that I do not think the difficulties to be encountered insuperable; that, on the contrary, I am full of faith in the possibilities of the subject. If I have dealt with general principles rather than with details, I hope you will not feel this is merely beating the air. For I venture to think that these principles lie very close to our practice, and that what we need for success is not so much rules of method and outlines of courses, valuable as these are, but teachers who combine with adequate knowledge and the student's reverence for sound learning the saving graces of common sense, humour, and sympathy, a clear vision of their aim, the feeling that literature is a help to them in their own lives, and the earnest desire to make it a help to the lives of others.

## II

### THE WRITING OF ENGLISH <sup>1</sup>

I WAS led to the choice of my subject by the publication recently of a little book bearing the title of *The Writing of English*, and written by Mr. P. J. Hartog, Academic Registrar of the University of London.<sup>2</sup> The book attracted a good deal of notice in the press ; and there was, I think, a consensus among the critics that the writer had attacked the worst defect in our English educational system, and had further done a good service in calling the attention of English schoolmasters to the contrast presented by the training in the mother-tongue in France.

In his preface Mr.<sup>3</sup> Hartog laid down four propositions, which he proceeded to develop in his book :

- (1) The English boy cannot write English.
- (2) The English boy is not taught to write English.
- (3) The French boy can write French.
- (4) The French boy can write French because he is taught how to write.

<sup>1</sup> The substance of an address delivered to branches of the English Association at Liverpool, February 29, 1908, and Bradford, December 10, 1909, and to a meeting held to consider the formation of a branch at Sheffield, February 26, 1909. Some sentences have appeared in articles in the *Preparatory Schools' Review* and *School World*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Writing of English*, by P. J. Hartog, with the assistance of Mrs. Amy H. Langdon. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> Now (1931) Sir Philip Hartog.



He follows these up with another proposition, that the English boy can be taught to write English, not exactly by French methods, but by methods for which French experience can give us some valuable hints; and he describes the successful experiments he has himself made with a class of working-men and a class of children in Manchester. I wish to treat of the subject from a point of view rather different from Mr. Hartog's; my own experience having lain in a different direction; but I think I cannot begin better than by saying a few words about each of his first four propositions.

(1) *The English boy cannot write English.* This is a complaint which we hear on all hands; and it seems to apply equally to every rank of life and every class of school. Whether boys leave school at thirteen or sixteen or eighteen, whether they are destined for business, for the army, or for the university and the learned professions,—in all cases alike we hear that they are frequently unable to write their own language with any approach to clearness or accuracy. I need not stay to multiply proofs. Many among my audience are familiar with Board of Education reports, in which we are told, for example, that the average pupil of secondary schools 'has no acquaintance with the English language as used by those who know how to use it, and it is not surprising that when he attempts to express himself on paper, or orally, he has little skill or facility.' Others, again, have read what Mr. Benson has to say of the Eton boy in the *Upton Letters* and other works; and if you suspect him of having, as a literary man, an ideal that is 'too bright and good for human nature's daily food,' you can hardly refuse

to admit his testimony when you find it confirmed by a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons writing in the *Times* :

Men whose education has been conducted on the 'modern' side of a school, and subsequently in 'science' classes, have seldom learnt any language at all, and are often incapable of expressing themselves with clearness or accuracy. They often possess only a very limited vocabulary; the construction of their sentences is often extremely faulty; and they frequently misapply even quite common words, because they have never been taught to understand and consider meaning.<sup>1</sup>

(2) *The English boy is not taught to write English.* I hope this statement is not quite so universally true as Mr. Hartog thinks. In any case, I am glad to believe that it could not truthfully be extended to English girls. There are many girls' schools, and I feel certain that there are many classes in boys' schools, in which English composition is taught admirably. But the facts already referred to are a sufficient proof that the boys' school in which composition is well and systematically taught from the bottom to the top is quite the exception. I confess that I am without the evidence that I should like to have as to the practice of the bulk of our secondary schools and public schools in this respect. How far is the weekly or fortnightly essay a regular institution? Is it generally given to be written in school or to be done as home-work? Is the subject of it announced in advance? Are books supposed to be used in the writing of it, or is the use of books discouraged or forbidden? Is there any oral preparation for the essay,

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, December 31, 1907.



whether in the shape of a lecture by the master or a discussion between the master and the class? Have the themes chosen any connexion with the class-work? These are some of the questions to which one would like an answer. Meanwhile, until I receive the answers, I cannot believe that they would be widely satisfactory, because it is my experience that a little trouble taken with the school-essay in these respects speedily has an effect; and therefore one is reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the trouble is not very often taken. In the old days, when the 'grand old fortifying curriculum' of the classics still held sway, the miserable performances of English boys in English composition were frequently laid at the door of their classical training. Boys, it was said with reason—and we still hear the complaint about the classical sides of some of our public schools—, give up so much of their time to Latin and Greek that the study of English is entirely neglected. By the defenders of the classics the reply was made that a boy learnt his own language in the best possible way in the process of translating from the classical languages into English and from English into Latin and Greek; that the writing of Latin prose and verse, in particular, involved a careful and minute study of choice passages from English writers, and was unsurpassed as a method of learning the precise signification of English words, or the natural order of words in an English sentence, or the rhythms of the best English style. So far as the ablest boys who underwent a classical training were concerned, the defence was—and is—a good one. With regard to the majority of those who passed through our secondary schools it was unconvincing. There

seemed to be no evidence that they had attained to this choice fruit of their classical training, but, on the contrary, a good deal of evidence that they had missed it. So the day of modern sides and science sides and technical schools dawned upon us. Is the English boy, in this important matter, any better off now? My own direct experience, except in the way of casual examining, is almost limited to two great schools—a great day-school and a great boarding-school; but, so far as it goes, it tends to show that the modern-side boy is a good deal worse off than the classical boy in regard to that knowledge of English words and the simpler English constructions which is indispensable for the writing of correct English. I have tried to test the English vocabulary of boys in the fifth form of a great public school, and I have found the majority of them without a glimmering of the meaning of words that ought to form part of the stock-in-trade of every intelligent and self-respecting Englishman. Let me give you an instance. I asked one day for definitions of four words which occurred in a lesson of Gibbon—*amnesty*, *suffrage*, *equity*, *adulation*—and from one boy, certainly not the least intelligent in the form, I received these answers:

*amnesty* = descent,  
*suffrage* = forbearance,  
*equity* = eloquence,  
*adulation* = overflowing.

(I had imagined that current events <sup>1</sup> would have made the meaning of *suffrage*, at any rate, familiar. Current events had indeed left their mark, but chiefly in the association of the noun 'suffrage' with the verb 'to

<sup>1</sup> The agitation for woman-suffrage.



suffer'!) The author of these four definitions has come nearly to the end of his school-days. He and his parents doubtless flatter themselves that he has received the best education that England has to give. And in some respects, in some important respects, he *has* received a valuable education. The educational ideal of the old Persian nobles has often been praised for its beautiful simplicity. They taught their sons 'to ride, to shoot, and to speak the truth.' The public-school education of the English gentleman of to-day is fairly entitled to praise on similar grounds. But yet, we may well ask, ought we to be satisfied with an education that leaves a boy without a notion of the meaning of any English words except such as stand for the common objects of daily life? How is it possible for a young man under such conditions to obtain an intelligent grasp of the problems that confront him on his entrance into the larger world—problems of citizenship, of social life, of religion and morality? Unless the education of the world stirs him to that intellectual vigour which his school training has signally failed to awaken, he will continue all his life in a mental fog.

Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,  
Dull sullen pris'ners in the body's cage :  
Dim lights of life that burn a length of years  
Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchres :  
Like Eastern kings a lazy state they keep,  
And, close confin'd to their own palace, sleep.<sup>1</sup>

Shall we be content with this? Shall we not rather say that it should be the sovereign aim of all our higher education to fortify a man beforehand against the

<sup>1</sup> Pope, *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*.

lethargy of custom, the lazy acceptance of the Idols of the Tribe, the Cave, the Theatre, and the Marketplace, the vain repetition of party catchwords and nicknames, and to give him the power of clear, vigorous, independent thought? It is because I believe that a training in composition, given in an enlightened spirit, can do more for this end than anything else that we can do at school that I press its importance on you.

(3) *The French boy can write French.* I think most of us must have been impressed by the superiority of the French journalist's writing of French over the English journalist's writing of English. At least, if we have failed to notice this, it can only be that in our pardonable national pride in the superior efficiency of our newspapers as purveyors of full and prompt intelligence from every quarter of the globe we have not stopped to compare them with French newspapers in this matter of style. Again, I think that any of us who have had occasion to look into French scientific or philosophical or historical writing, or literary criticism, will have been struck by the higher average level attained in France as compared with the corresponding class of writing in England. We have had in England eminent scientific men who have written in clear, correct, beautiful, rhythmical English. The names of Huxley and Tyndall will occur to you all.<sup>1</sup> But such instances are exceptional. There is at least some danger that the language of science in England—which ought surely to be the English language used with supreme care and accuracy—may degenerate into

<sup>1</sup> Some more recent names, such as Eddington, Jeans, Osler and Singer, should also be mentioned with honour.



a professional dialect. I read lately a document of an education committee of the London County Council submitting the report of their medical officer on the health of secondary schools—I beg their pardon: I believe I ought to have called it ‘school hygiene.’ Well, I am not sure whether the credit of the following portentous sentence belongs to the medical officer or to the committee:

The physical exercise of infants during evolution of their motor acquirements should tend to forms explosive in violence and duration.

I will venture on no comment. The only natural and appropriate comment that I know of, supplied by the English language, tends, like the exercises, to a ‘form explosive in violence and duration.’ But I seem to have got a long way from the French boy. I wanted to arrive first at an admission that the cultivated Frenchman writes French better than the cultivated Englishman writes English, and so at a presumption that the French boy will be found to write French better than the English boy writes English. That presumption is fully borne out by Mr. Hartog’s interesting report of his experience of French schools. The essay on the Gingerbread Fair, written by a boy of fourteen in a higher primary school, may well move an English schoolmaster to admiring envy (Hartog, pp. 33-4). The other specimen exercise given by Mr. Hartog (pp. 38-40), a description of the sailing of the deep-sea fishermen from a little Breton port, is a still more striking performance. It is likewise the work of a boy of fourteen, but this time of a boy attending a secondary school and coming from a more cultivated home. But Mr. Hartog gives us the

assurance of the boy's master that, though this was selected as the best exercise produced on this particular theme in this class of small boys, the lowest class in the Lycée in which continuous composition is taught, the writer of it was by no means always first in his class or best in composition. There is, no doubt, as the master pointed out to Mr. Hartog, a good deal of Pierre Loti in this description as well as of direct observation. This consideration helps to explain a performance that would otherwise, I think, be almost incredible. But I mention it, not as a reason for giving less admiration to the result, but as a reason to be remembered presently when we come to discuss the best methods of teaching composition.

(4) *The French boy can write French because he is taught how to write.* The truth of this proposition is amply proved by Mr. Hartog's account of the systematic teaching of composition in French primary schools, higher primary schools, and secondary schools (see especially pp. 30-3, 36-42). Let me quote from his account of the method followed in the higher primary school :

The pupil is taught first of all to write a *narration*. The plan of a simple story is given him, and he is told that he must fill in details, keeping the whole story in the same proportion as the outline. On this point the teacher insists absolutely. . . .

As the pupil progresses, the outline is reduced and the amount required from his own initiative increased. . . . The outline will still serve as a general guide for the arrangement of his material, but he is given more and more freedom in this respect until he finally learns to form his plan for himself, a brief subject alone being dictated by the teacher (pp. 32-3).



But power to write a description of this kind could certainly not be obtained merely by practice in writing. There is a second element in the teaching of style which is regarded by the French as no less essential : the systematic study and analysis of the French classics. The pupils are taught to read great French authors and constantly to analyse what they read, to pass backward from the developed composition to the plan (pp. 35-6).

In the programme for the higher primary schools translations from foreign masterpieces, English and German, are also prescribed. . . . In addition a certain number of the classical plays of Corneille, Racine and Molière are read through and give the pupils an idea of compositions on a large scale ; while the *Morceaux Choisis* give them a freedom of style and fullness of vocabulary that they could not learn from a single writer, however great (p. 38).

I wish to emphasize the last two paragraphs because, in spite of some admirable pages later on in the book on the reading of English literature and the excellent example of the analysis of a passage from Kinglake, I fear that a possible effect of some of Mr. Hartog's strictures, and of his own collection of exercises, might be to restrict unduly the teacher's choice of subjects. No doubt subjects set for school-essays have often been absurdly beyond a schoolboy's capacity ; but it would be a calamity if we were to limit ourselves to stories or to subjects that never called out the powers of our abler pupils.

May I protest, in passing, against the modern heresy—I do not mean to attribute it to Mr. Hartog—that educational methods ought simply to consider the needs of the average boy and girl, and that clever pupils do not need the help of the schoolmaster, but may well be left to take care of themselves ? As a reaction from the exploitation of the many for the

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benefit of the few there is something to be said for this doctrine, but it may easily be carried too far. There is one thing that an older man can and ought to do for pupils who are abler than himself: he can save them valuable time by anticipating for them discoveries they might otherwise not make till they were twenty or twenty-five, or even thirty. And surely it is for the highest good of the community that the best that is possible should be done for the citizens of greatest promise.

Let me now sketch a plan for the teaching of composition applicable to an English boys' secondary school.

FIRST STAGE—*Boys of 8 to 12.* The difficulty of finding subjects within the capacity of the pupil is naturally greater at this stage than afterwards, but I do not think that there is any reason for the very narrow limits which some schoolmasters impose upon their choice. A small boy of my acquaintance in his first week at a preparatory school was told to write an essay on 'How I spent my summer holidays.' He addressed himself to the subject with great enthusiasm, little knowing how many times, in all likelihood, the same theme would be required of him during the next ten years of his life. The next week the subject was 'Cricket.' The third week it was 'How I spent my Christmas holidays.' The boy announced the subject at home with great disgust. 'He wants to know everything that ever I did, and I don't like it.' You will hardly need to be told that the subject for the fourth essay was 'Football.' I do not know whether I have taken an extreme case, but I hardly think so. The

schoolmaster who set these particular essays was a man of experience and reputation as a preparatory schoolmaster, a man with a real power of understanding and dealing with small boys. But, apart from the fact that he had in the first month of the Christmas term apparently exhausted all the subjects that would occur to him as suitable for youthful essays during the whole of a scholastic year, his subjects are open to serious criticism on other grounds. First, they are too large. A description of a particular game of football would be a subject within the compass of a small boy, and if the schoolmaster took the opportunity of teaching him that forms like 'footer' and 'soccer' do not belong to literary English, that would be an additional reason for choosing this theme. But 'football' in the abstract, without any directions as to the manner in which the subject was to be treated, was certain to lead, as it did, to an absolutely amorphous production that had neither beginning, middle, nor end, properly speaking. The same criticism, if in a less degree, applies to 'How I spent my holidays.' Indeed, I remember that the particular boy whose experience I am giving you, when, later in the same term, he was asked to write on 'How I spent Christmas Day,' left himself and his family, at the end of his essay, on the way to church in the morning. Not a hint had been given as to proportion and arrangement, and I doubt whether these all-important things were much taken into account in the awarding of marks. Spelling, punctuation, the correct use of capitals—if he gets these the English schoolmaster at this stage is generally too thankful to ask for anything more. It is just here that we may most usefully appeal to the French schoolmaster; for his



practice abundantly proves that it is possible to ask for, and receive, *a great deal more*.

The French method is to insist that even in the elementary stage the essay shall have a plan, so that arrangement and proportion may be taught from the first. The child cannot, of course, make a plan for himself without help. Either he must be given a book with some sort of outline in it, or—and this second method is the better—the plan must be developed in oral discussion between teacher and class. A great advantage of this second method is that, at an age when boys are often much more free from self-consciousness and much more willing to talk than they will be five years later, it may be used to train the pupil to express himself orally in complete grammatical sentences. In spite of all that has been said and written of late years about the value of training in oral expression, I fear that too many of us still allow our pupils in their intercourse with us in school to imitate those silent gentlemen mentioned by Cowper who ‘literally observe the precept of the Gospel and let their conversation be Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay.’

What sort of outline shall we develop in class? Something very short indeed, for we must remember that the small boy, writing a large round hand on alternate lines, cannot get more than four or five points at most into an hour’s essay. But from the first we can teach him that every essay must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. We can suggest a variety of beginnings, and we can show how and why the beginning will determine to some extent the nature of what follows. We can start questions without supplying the answers. In these ways we can give the class

very material help without doing anything to destroy their independence of thought or to reduce their essays to one dull stereotyped form.

I have recommended this oral preparation for the essay in preference to the giving of a book of outlines to the class. Most of the published outlines—the English specimens at least—seem to me *too long*. For instance, one such book was sent to me the other day. There was an outline in it of an essay on a Railway Station. The last sentence of the outline ran : ‘ After the train has departed the station is again restored to comparative tranquillity.’ I have been trying to think out the kind of way in which the young pupil was intended to clothe with a body that rather stout skeleton. Do you think that something like this can have been meant ? ‘ Finally, when the reverberations of the now rapidly receding locomotive have ceased to deafen the tympani of our ears, when the invaluable porters and the auxiliary corps of assistant-inspectors and officious newsboys and alluring cake-vendors have withdrawn themselves from their perilous proximity to the dizzy verge of the platform ’—this might perhaps do for the opening of the sentence, but I confess that I have had to abandon the attempt to amplify ‘ comparative tranquillity.’

It so happened that just after I had written this criticism I opened a French book of outlines,<sup>1</sup> and discovered that the very first outline in it was on precisely this theme of the railway station. I looked at once to the conclusion, and found these words and these only—*Silence dans la gare*.

<sup>1</sup> *Nouveaux Sujets de Composition Française*. Par P. Richardot. Paris : Librairie Ch. Delagrave.



For the rest, I am not sure that the English schoolmaster will derive much direct assistance for his task from these French models. Some of the best are collected in an appendix to Mr. Hartog's book—mostly outlines of very simple narratives for the pupil to fill in from his own imagination. Any collection of anecdotes would supply a teacher with material of this kind. Some of the outlines in the little book from which I have quoted would provoke a class of English boys, I fear, to unseemly mirth. The French boy presumably takes himself and his lesson-books more seriously. For instance, we have a model letter written from school to a schoolfellow detained at home by infectious illness. It is suggested to the pupil that he should dwell on the delights of the Ovid and Caesar that are being read in class, and especially on the interest which the patriotic French boy naturally feels in Caesar's account of the ancient Gauls. It is to be feared that Caesar's account of the ancient Britons would not loom very large in any letter written by a British schoolboy to a real or imaginary friend. Another theme is a character-sketch of the good—I am not sure that I ought not to translate it the 'goody'—pupil. The outline for the concluding paragraph is as follows: 'I recollect his successes at the distribution of prizes, his own delight and that of his relatives. How much I should like to imitate him.' A footnote suggests that the portrait of a bad pupil would also be a profitable subject, and concludes with the judicious if cynical remark that this is the easier theme of the two, because it is always easier to find defects than excellences! I will mention one more theme only—the description of a night-journey by train. The pupil

is recommended to sketch lightly his fellow-passengers : ' for example, a mother and her son, and an Englishman, a cold and severe man.' You observe that my manual was written before the days of the *entente cordiale*. Then comes the counsel, in brackets : ' Never descend to triviality in your description.' To this essay there is also a footnote warning the too adventurous essayist that he is not to run his train off the line or into collision with another. That theme, our professor warns us, would be *trop vaste*, and he quotes an admirable proverb to the effect that ' he who knows not how to limit himself knows not how to write.'

Well, I take it that at this early stage short narratives—either reproductions of a story previously told to the class, or stories and descriptions composed on the French plan, in which the child's own imagination is left to fill in a bare outline given to him—will form the staple of the essays. But if there is proper oral preparation we need not confine ourselves to these. Mr. Hartog says that it is ridiculous to ask a schoolboy to write an essay on Shakespeare. I am not going to defend that as an ideal subject for a school-theme, but I am not sure that it is not a better subject for a boy of 12 than for a boy of 18, and a better subject for a boy of 18 than for a man of 50. We must remember that it is comparatively easy for a boy of 12 to put all he knows about Shakespeare into a couple of pages. But I do not think that a boy of 12 will learn much from writing an essay on Shakespeare unless he is given a few hints as to the arrangement of his material and the observance of proportion between the parts of his subject.



A word as to the amount of correction that is desirable. Elaborate written corrections are a weariness to the teacher, and of little use to the pupil. Written correction need not go beyond the criticism of writing, spelling, punctuation, and grammatical mistakes. But from the first let us make it plain that these things, important as they are, are not the main things in the writing of an essay. I fear that in the minds of some preceptors of youth they do usurp a place which ought not to belong to them. I was looking the other day at a book called *First Lessons in English*, and at the end were some hints on 'How to write an essay.' The concluding piece of advice was, 'Finally, take care to indent your paragraphs.' If we give advice on such mechanical minutiae, let that advice never be our final word. We want to reserve *that* for the larger aspects of essay-writing, for considerations that will make even the small boy feel that he is being trained in a worthy art.

Profitable criticism of composition becomes easier as we advance to the next stage—the stage of the middle forms of secondary schools. Errors of taste, flaws in reasoning, faults of arrangement, generally fall into a few well-defined groups. We can make notes of illustrative instances as we read through the essays, and comment on them to the class afterwards. For example, if you have the luck, as happened lately at Clifton, to receive an essay in which certain politicians are described as 'on the *qui vive* for shekels and kudos,' the mere reading out of such a trilingual monstrosity will probably stamp an important lesson in style on the memories of a part of the class.



It may sometimes be a good plan to write, or sketch orally, a sort of 'fair copy.' If we do this we must make it clear that we are giving only one out of several possible ways of handling the subject—that there is no cut-and-dried pattern for the English essay. The correction of compositions, as of all school exercises, should be prompt. A class will only be interested in the discussion of an essay so long as their own efforts and difficulties are fresh in their recollection. These remarks apply to all grades of composition-teaching.

With the intermediate stage the choice of subjects widens considerably. I would suggest that the majority of them should have some relation to the work of the class—their work in history or geography or natural science, or the classical, foreign, or English author they are reading. One advantage of this is that it helps a boy to realize the interdependence of his studies, to see that progress in one can be made to help progress in the others. The further advantage that it provides straw for the making of the expected bricks is perhaps too obvious to mention: yet the cardinal reason for the failure of the essay in English schools has been the practice of requiring bricks without either providing straw or any hint of directions in which it may be looked for. It will be a good plan to vary these essays for which class-work provides the material with an occasional theme for which we send the boys to the school library to dig out material for themselves, giving them some hint as to the right sort of book and the right way of using it. Whenever an essay is based upon a book, it is important that the pupil should have no access to it at the time of writing. The ability to use a book that is open before one at

the time of writing an essay, for any other purpose than that of copying, belongs to a quite late stage in the art of composition.

If we set a high standard for the essay—and these remarks assume that the standard is to be a high one—I believe that the class is more likely to reach it if an essay is required only once a fortnight than if it is demanded at more frequent intervals. In the alternate weeks I would substitute some form of exercise in composition—perhaps the reproduction of a passage that has been read to the class—say, a narrative from Gibbon or Macaulay, or an essay of Addison or Steele, or an extract from Burke. In such a case the reproduction should not be immediate, or it becomes a mere effort of memory. Nor, I think, should we ask for anything like a close verbal reproduction: the pupil is to be free to use his own words. At the same time, the style is to be appropriate to the theme; and if he remembers the words of the original, he is *not* to be encouraged to avoid them and substitute an inferior paraphrase.

Another exercise that will have a good effect upon the composition may be got out of any standard prose author. Give the class a few minutes in which to make a list of any words they find at all difficult within a couple of pages. Let them take different pages of the book, so that you may have a fairly long list of words for discussion. At the next lesson the class might be asked to construct sentences which illustrate the correct use of the words discussed. An occasional lesson in the shades of difference between so-called synonyms is also very valuable; but it presupposes, perhaps more than most lessons, accurate



knowledge or careful preparation on the part of the teacher.<sup>1</sup>

I come finally to the teaching of composition in the highest classes of a secondary school, where I believe that an enlightened enthusiasm for the subject can make it at least as valuable as—I should myself say, more valuable than—any other part of the school curriculum in assisting a boy's or girl's intellectual and moral development. Here again a large proportion of the themes should have some relation to the work that is being done by the class; and the essay will be useful not merely in giving opportunity for the study in greater detail, and the independent following out of subjects touched upon in the ordinary routine, but also in awakening that intelligent and conscious reflection about the goal of study which so often at this particular moment of adolescence means an intellectual new-birth. We may assist this fresh start of the mental life still more, perhaps, by themes that are less directly connected with class-routine, if we choose them wisely and are at pains to make them interesting. The essay ought now to stimulate and widen a pupil's reading, and to teach the beginnings of literary criticism and moral reflection. But we can hardly expect our pupils to think for themselves if we set them subjects on which they can find the thinking done for them. A little forethought, however, will often discover a subject for which the pupil can get no direct help from books, though he must read books in order to treat it properly. If we demand a character of Achilles or Hotspur, for example, we may be sure that no boy who finds

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Meyrick Heath on 'Teaching of Composition in Higher Forms of Secondary Schools,' *School World*, 1908.



remarks upon them in an introduction to Homer or *Henry V* will make his reflections independently. But we may profitably ask for a comparison between the two characters. Some boys at least will be sufficiently interested to read Homer and Shakespeare for themselves, and draw out the points of likeness and of contrast. It would be difficult to rate too highly the value of the mental stride a pupil takes when he first consciously makes a literary and ethical judgment of this kind for himself. A valuable mental exercise is also afforded by talking to a class on a subject that might be too difficult for them to handle unaided, and then setting them to write an essay on it. This plan may very well be applied to elementary questions of political economy and political philosophy, or to the subject which we are learning to call 'civics.' In such cases a wise teacher will know how to encourage any signs of independent thought or study on the part of his pupils. He will also take great care not to prejudge open questions: he will state the 'pros' and 'cons' as clearly and as fairly as he can, and make the discussion of the essay-subject an opportunity for teaching, by example more than by precept, the virtue of a sweet reasonableness, the duty of trying to understand and appreciate an opponent's point of view. Indeed, there is hardly any limit to the good uses which the essay, at this advanced stage, may be made to serve. Whatever things lie nearest to the teacher's heart, whatever things he has found precious in his own life—the love of goodness, the love of truth, the love of beauty in Nature and Art and Literature—he will see to it that the lesson in composition shall be a help and not a hindrance to these things.

Only, once more, if we set our aim high, we must not expect essays too often. No one can do his best work every day. Once a fortnight will be often enough for an essay requiring study and independent thought. For the alternate weeks we may provide, if it is found advisable, exercises of a less ambitious character—the reproduction of an historical argument or description, the translation of extracts from sixteenth- or seventeenth-century writers into modern prose, *précis*-writing, and so forth.

If we keep all such exercises in their proper place, if we make it clear that we use them merely as means to an end, and that this end is the training of the pupil's mental powers, his moral judgment, and his taste, to their highest perfection, we need have no fear that English Composition will be a barren, mechanical, soulless exercise, or that it will do anything to discourage the love of literature. I will own that, valuable as I believe the study to be as a mental training in other ways, my interest in it is due, more than to anything else, to the belief that it can be used to promote such an enlightened love of literature as will be a lifelong happiness to its possessors. It is by no means desirable that all who write compositions at school should go on writing them in later life. I do not think we shall increase the flood of printed matter by good composition-teaching: I believe we shall lessen it. For by the study of composition we gain a new insight into the art as it is practised by great writers, a new respect for it, a deeper delight in the great work that can only be produced slowly, a new impatience with the bad work that can be produced in any quantity, at any pace. Mr. Mackail is



so much afraid of what we schoolmasters may do for the love of literature, that he warned us <sup>1</sup> that our first duty was to eliminate the text-book, and our next, and hardest, to eliminate ourselves. For the pedagogic spirit which is the besetting sin of our profession, and of which our friends in other professions very properly lose no opportunity of reminding us, his words are a just and wholesome rebuke. We need to be warned against the danger of saying too much, of explaining everything, of expecting everybody to like the same things. Yet we must not be discouraged by these counsels. The modern-side schoolmaster, when he is recommended to 'stand aside and leave the child face to face with literature,' may reflect that, if he followed the advice too literally, his class would be left face to face with literature in a sense that was not intended by Mr. Mackail: they would probably be throwing the books at each other's heads! No, if ever our English literature is to have its rightful place and influence in the life of the nation, we must look to the schools to achieve this result.

You will not wonder if I take a depressed view of the national taste in literature, when you remember my long journey to-day, and how, each time the express slackened its speed, I have seemed to see the book-stalls groaning under their load of printed trash. For more than two centuries it has been remembered to the discredit of the England of the Restoration that it offered John Milton five pounds for the manuscript of *Paradise Lost*. Ages yet unborn, I fear, will remember to the shame of this opening decade of the twentieth century that it bestowed—was it two thousand or five

<sup>1</sup> English Association Annual Meeting, January 11, 1908.



thousand pounds?—on that idiot who out of twenty thousand demented competitors attained the pinnacle of imbecility by the perpetration of the worst conceivable Limerick.

May I tell you a grim experience that once befell me travelling abroad? It was in the night-express from Mainz to Munich. In the same compartment was a man who seemed to be in the last stage of consumption—so ill that my companion and I feared he could not live through the night. He was a German, a man of education and refinement, and he was travelling home from England to die. Seeing that I was English, he asked me if I would care to see the latest London papers, as he had travelled straight through. I do not suppose he knew what had been given him; he was too ill to care. But he handed me two papers, and I found them to be *Chips* and *Comic Cuts*. To avoid seeming ungrateful, I had to try to read them. It would need the skill of a De Quincey to depict to you the ghastliness of the contrast as it forced itself on the imagination—the solemnity of that chamber of Death, as it seemed to us, speeding over the darkened plain, and the hideousness of that leering, grinning mirth on the printed page. But I know that I said to him in my heart words that I could not say with my lips. ‘Sir, you are presently going on a journey to the Elysian fields. And there, it may be, you will meet with the illustrious men of letters of our English past, those who wrote for English periodicals in the days gone by, Addison and Dicky Steele, Dr. Johnson and his friend “Goldy,” Charles Lamb and De Quincey. For my country’s sake, will you promise me not to tell them that this is the stuff which

their descendants are reading in the twentieth century ?'

I have no wish to take an unduly despondent view. I know there are not wanting signs that should encourage us greatly to hope for better things—in particular, the numerous editions of English classics for which there seems to be a great and growing demand. But if it is true, as I fancy it is, that a nation has the newspapers and magazines it deserves, the present state of our periodical press must give us cause for serious reflection. If the decadence of the last twenty years is not to continue, it is to the schools we must look to turn the tide—to teachers who care greatly for literature themselves, and who have the imagination and humour and sympathy by which they can make it attractive to the young.

Here in Liverpool some words that certain of your own poets have said come into my mind. First, the noble lines of William Watson that remind us, to our shame, how many of England's sons and daughters there are

Who have hardly heard  
Sound of her loftiest names, or any word  
Of all that hath in gold been said and sung,  
Since him of April heart and morning tongue,  
Her ageless singing-bird.

And then, for the encouragement of those who in this matter may feel that they are striving against a power that is too strong for them, some earlier words that are familiar to you all, yet surely never too familiar :

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light :  
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Clough, born in Liverpool, 1819.



### III

#### THE ESSAYIST IN SCHOOL <sup>1</sup>

A MID-VICTORIAN professor of poetry once went on a mission to an unpoetical late-Victorian family. They expressed their willingness to be converted, and submitted themselves to be experimented upon. For a beginning the professor chose Mrs. Browning's *Rhyme of the Duchess May*. Some of you will remember the story of Sir Guy of Linteged and his bride, how they were besieged in their castle by the ruthless Lord of Leigh, and how when the walls were undermined and the castle was already tottering to its fall, the devoted pair were seen for a moment, mounted on their favourite steed, on the topmost tower, and the next moment the horse and its burden plunged heavily into space. Thin and unreal it all seems to you now ; but that is because real life has become charged with high emotion and filled with heroic deeds. Thin and unreal it seemed to the listeners then ; but that was because life held no high emotion, and there were never any heroic deeds. But to the reader at least it was real enough, as with impressiveness of fatal repetition (I think these were his words) the refrain ' Toll slowly ' accompanied each step of the tragic action, striking across the impetuous rush of the trochaic rhythm in

<sup>1</sup> Read at a Conference on the Teaching of English held in connexion with the Shakespeare Summer Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon, August 1916 (the year of the Tercentenary Commemoration).

which love and youth and beauty were bold to proclaim their strength with its solemn spondaic answer, mocking at hope and fore-ordaining, as it were, from the first the catastrophe of the close. When the refrain had died away for the last time there was silence for a moment, and the professor deemed that his triumph was won. The eldest sister of the household was the first to speak. 'I don't see why they needed to throw away the life of a valuable horse as well as their own,' she said. 'Besides,' said the second sister, 'horses can't go upstairs.' 'Oh, yes,' said the youngest, 'they can: I've seen them do it at the trainer's.' Then the professor put away his book sadly and abandoned his mission.

'What, pray, has this story to do with the essayist in school?' is a question you have doubtless already put to yourselves; and I fear that you have already gone further and returned to the question an unfavourable answer. Well, if you drive me into a corner I shall be obliged to fall back upon the defence recently made by a pupil of mine, when I remonstrated with him for having occupied the first page and a half of an essay of three pages with an irrelevant anecdote. 'Sir,' he said to me in an aggrieved tone, 'I understand that Steele generally began his essays with a story.' But I am going to be more audacious, and profess to you that the story is an allegory, and conveys to us a moral so important that it is worth taking as the text of my discourse this morning. The moral I draw is this: Cultivate the imagination, but continually bring the imagination to the test of common sense, of humour and matter-of-fact. So, in the teaching of English composition, Aim high—very high, indeed: 'Hitch

your waggon to a star,' as Emerson said ; but never forget that the main use of learning to write for the average boy and girl is to learn to express themselves clearly and accurately in the matters of ordinary life.

Let me take this humbler but all-important aim first. It is just here surely that the strength of our position lies. We are not offering a luxury or one optional subject out of many that may find a place in a school curriculum. We are offering, if we are living up to our opportunity, something that every learner needs. Through this gateway, the mastery of the English tongue, every specialist should pass. I need not labour to prove this, for I think it is already admitted by a very fair consensus of educated opinion—at least as great a consensus of educated opinion, I make bold to say, as you will get on any educational proposition that you choose to bring forward. If it is not more fully realized by the general public, the reason may lie in the fact that the English teacher has seldom in the past been given his opportunity—at least in boys' schools. Until the last few years the tradition has persisted, perhaps it still persists, that the English language can be learnt sufficiently through the medium of other languages, ancient or modern. Or, again, it may be that the Essay as understood by schoolmasters and examining bodies has had so little relation to human needs and interests that the public, consulting its own dim but still rather painful recollections of the subject, is naturally indisposed to attribute to it any utility whatever. And yet, with all deference to Dogberry, reading and writing do not come by nature. If we need to be convinced how rare is the power of expression even on the level of simple matters of fact, we



have only to turn to the correspondence column of any newspaper and marvel at the grotesque complications and convolutions of phraseology we shall find there, or open the average technical handbook or scientific treatise. What a beautiful thing human speech is when it is conveying a clear message with perfect fitness ! And how seldom do we enjoy the pleasure of this beauty, which, one would think, we ought to be able to enjoy every day of our lives. Cheapness and ugliness seem to be as characteristic of modern speech as of modern street architecture. The journalistic style may suggest the pretentious shop-front with plate-glass and electric lights, or perhaps the façade of a picture-palace ; the rhetorical style, a modern public building in the sham Gothic or pseudo-classical manner ; the scientific style, the ugly square front of a factory. Was there never—yes, we have seen it once and again—is there not still possible a style of writing and speaking that shall satisfy us with the perfect adaptation of simple means to simple ends, as the eye is satisfied by the perfect beauty, simplicity and fitness of a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century dwelling-house in Warwickshire or on the Cotswold hills ?

So far, I think, you will all agree with me. And the deficiencies in the practice of to-day that we all deplore are perhaps largely due to the shortcomings of older methods of teaching that no one here would wish to defend—to these and to that tide of modern journalistic jargon, pouring in from all the seven seas at once, which the schoolmaster often feels as powerless to stem as Mrs. Partington was to keep back the Atlantic with her broom. Much has been done in the last few years to improve the teaching of English composition in the

earlier stages. In the absence of more direct proof, I can gather this from the large number of manuals that have been produced for teachers and pupils. Greatly as these differ in merit, they all agree, I think, in preferring concrete subjects to abstract, and in beginning with subjects that are within the child's experience. Not all subjects of this kind, we shall do well to remember, are recent discoveries. Even in my own childhood the inquisition into what I had done with my last holidays had already begun. A present veracious pupil of mine informs me that an epidemic of this subject still rages with unabated fury three times a year. He further assures me that at an early stage of his career, having elder brothers to warn him what was coming, he composed three typical essays with winter, spring, and summer colouring respectively, and that he finds this has meant a great economy of labour in recent years. Now, limited as is the child's experience, a little imagination on the part of the teacher might still invent a considerable variety of subjects that can be handled with success. Concrete the subjects should be, and descriptive or narrative, not ratiocinative as a rule, though an occasional argument on a fairly simple question may be enjoyed at this age quite as much as later. But it is unpardonable to confine unduly the range of themes and to force the small boy to write continually on cricket and football, as if he did not get enough of them already on the field and in the conversation of his masters. It is really sad to see how the schoolmaster is sometimes engaged in steadily narrowing the interests of his boys—not, as the old-fashioned teacher may often have done, by belabouring them with subjects with which



their minds have no natural point of contact, but by steadily refusing, in his dull conscientious effort to give them only subjects about which he is certain that they know something, to open for them any outlets into the world of interests that is waiting to fascinate their attention and develop their intelligence.

Another point of improvement I have noticed is the absence from recent manuals, in some cases at least, of the model essay. Mr. Townsend Warner<sup>1</sup> indeed has a chapter with this title, but it is a variation of the time-honoured jest in the chapter on snakes in the natural history of Iceland ; for he presents us with three blank pages and a footnote in the form of a dialogue between himself and a pupil. ' But where is the model essay ? ' the pupil asks, and the pedagogue replies, ' Oh, that is for you to write.' This seems to me very sound doctrine. There is, it is true, the essay by the great writer. It has long been a favourite plan of my own to use this as a model. Sometimes, as you will have judged from a story I have already told you, I am too successful. Still, on the whole I retain my faith in the plan. The difficulty is to find essays that are short enough and simple enough to serve as models. For the most part one has to fall back upon the eighteenth century—Steele, Addison, Goldsmith. The modern essay is generally too clever, too subtle, or too paradoxical, or too self-conscious, to be a wholly satisfactory model. Sincerity is not often its most prominent characteristic ; and sincerity is first of all the virtues of style. If a model essay by a great writer is not available, the next best thing is a model

<sup>1</sup>*On the Writing of English.* By G. Townsend Warner. London: Blackie. 1915.



essay by one of the class. I do not mean that such an essay should be read aloud: that takes up too much time, and may not be good for the writer. But I think it well to give the class, if we can, some opportunity of glancing at each other's essays. Pupils can sometimes learn more from the efforts of others of their own age than from more mature productions, and they certainly find the youthful performances more interesting.

There is another reason for rejoicing in the disappearance of the model essay of the old-fashioned manual. It was too often itself disfigured by a peculiarly infectious vice of style—the liberal use of ready-made phrases. Probably you all know the wise words of R. L. Stevenson on that subject in his essay on *The Art of Writing*. More recently Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has devoted a whole lecture of his Cambridge course to what he calls 'Jargon,' and Mr. Townsend Warner wittily attacks the same vice with a profusion of vivid metaphors, destined, alas! to be worn out in their turn by the too frequent use of admiring schoolmasters. He instances such commonplace combinations as 'appointed destination,' 'disastrous failure,' 'earnest solicitations,' 'immediate necessities,' and denounces them as reach-me-down suits and as old bones lying in the road chewed by every passing dog for a moment, and then dropped for the next comer. 'When a turn of speech rushes into your pen crying, "Here you are; everyone uses me: you can't want anything better," reply to it: "No, thank you!"'

All this is admirable, and it can hardly be said too often. For the vice is always with us—there! I have provided you with an instance in this very sentence. If we are not careful, the practice of essay-writing may

easily encourage the fault ; and if ever we find judges whose opinion we are bound to respect distrusting the practice of essay-writing, it is because they have had some experience of this kind. I could tell you of at least one preparatory school, from which boys are sent out at fourteen fluent writers of periphrastic journalese on any subject you like to offer them. They have acquired the art of writing as a means of expressing—nothing at all. It is a deplorable acquisition. If a pupil comes to you unable to string together half-a-dozen sentences, the case is not hopeless. You may conquer his self-distrust and convince him gradually that the art of self-expression is not so difficult as it seems, and is full of interest besides. But when a boy has once got the notion that the literary art consists in kicking up a fine dust of phrases, and that he is something of a literary genius because he can do this at a faster rate than any other boy in the form, the teacher's task is not an enviable one. He has delicately and tactfully to convince the pupil that the flowers of speech he has been admiring are in the worst possible taste, and to show him that he has got to unlearn his art and begin again at the beginning. Educational theorists sometimes write as if the natural boy desired to be taught how to think. The sad truth is that there is nothing that many boys like better than being taught to evade the necessity for thinking. If you teach an 'art of rhetoric' that plausibly disguises the absence of all thought, you will have no lack of willing pupils.

One other point before I have done with the essay on the humble level of practical utility. Let the subjects, more often than not, be closely related to the work of the form. The author of a manual of com-



position, or the examiner in a public examination, is generally under the necessity of propounding a theme *in vacuo*. He cannot assume any special intimacy with any particular group of facts : sometimes he is actually under a certain obligation not to give candidates who may possess a knowledge of a particular group of facts any advantage from their possession. The teacher of composition in school is not fettered in this way ; and he makes a serious mistake if he always avoids in his choice of a subject the ground of the lessons of the week. Especially should the composition be treated as a close auxiliary of the history and literature lessons, giving an opportunity for fuller research and more exhaustive reasoning than the ordinary paper of questions in history or literature supplies. It is sometimes said that ' Every lesson ought to be a lesson in English.' That is the ideal, but it will not be realized till the specialists who teach other subjects have themselves received a more thorough training in English than is always the case at present. But if English composition were always so taught that the specialist saw the advantage of it to his pupils, his attitude would surely be friendly, not hostile. He wants his pupils to be able to set out the material he gives them clearly and accurately ; he has generally intelligence enough to see when they can and when they cannot do this ; and if he, on his part, distrusts the composition lesson, is it not probably because he has a notion that it is doing the very thing against which we have been most strongly protesting—raising a cloud of words and making a vain display—instead of encouraging the virtues of careful observation, exact statement, sound reasoning ?



Careful observation, exact statement, sound reasoning—they are elementary virtues but difficult enough in practice, and if we get them we may well feel that the composition lesson is not a failure. But there are some other virtues to which we may also aspire. For education, if it is to be complete, must seek to train the imagination and the sympathies as well as the reason ; and I do not know any part of the school curriculum that can help more directly to these ends than the school-essay if only we fix our own aim high enough. I think I can best give you a reason for the faith that is in me by telling you of the work I saw accomplished at Clifton by Sidney Irwin, who for thirty years was responsible for the English essays of the Sixth Form. I speak of this work with the more confidence because at least two distinguished men of letters, Sir Henry Newbolt and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, have testified of their debt to their old master. His practice was to choose the subjects for the term's essays with immense care in the holidays, and to announce them all at the beginning of the term. The subjects were difficult—more often than not, too difficult, I think. You would be horrified if I read you a specimen list. But all the questions had this sovereign merit—that you could not find the direct answer to them in any book, though you could seldom touch the questions at all without some preliminary reading. Every question demanded severe thinking—first, to see what the question really meant—then, to find an answer. House-masters and house-tutors were frequently called in to give counsel to perplexed boys, and the Sixth Form essay-subjects served as an intellectual stimulus to some of the staff as well as to

Irwin's pupils. The essays were written at intervals of a fortnight, an average length being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  pages of foolscap. Every pupil went in turn to Irwin's study for a quarter of an hour to read his essay aloud and to hear it criticized. He was an exacting critic. Yet how bracing it was to have a great deal required of you that nobody else ever expected! How quick was his recognition of the slightest attempt that his pupils made to think for themselves! How deep was their shame when they saw his generous joy in some subtlety which he imagined to be their own, but which they knew they had borrowed from a book or perhaps from one of his notes! For the most characteristic feature of the method was the note—not in the least intended as a model essay, though it often was a charming essay-in-little—which Irwin used to write and cyclostyle or print for distribution to the form. It was, I fear, also characteristic that the note was often not ready till the last day of term, when essays as well as other school tasks were completely forgotten in the excitement of the approaching holidays; but even if the notes were little heeded at the moment, they were generally treasured, and not seldom turned to in later years, when their recipients discovered in them a depth of wisdom that would in any case have been hidden from boyish eyes. But I fancy what produced the profoundest impression upon his pupils, certainly upon his colleagues, was the pains he took in writing these notes, and the modesty which led him to submit them to the judgment of colleagues and friends before he would venture to give them to the Sixth. Just so, I like to imagine, might Shakespeare, if we had had the luck to meet him at the Mermaid, have consulted us



with a modest deprecating deference about the handling of some situation in *Hamlet* or *Othello*. And with what a cheerful assurance would some of us, so appealed to, have delivered our verdict !

Forgive me that last sentence ; it was not meant seriously. We have not come to Stratford to deliver judgment on Shakespeare, but that Shakespeare may deliver judgment on us. And I cannot end what I have to say this morning better than by an appeal to the *genius loci*. But how am I to make that appeal ? The *Times Literary Supplement* has reminded us rightly that a Shakespeare Commemoration commemorates Shakespeare as an institution, and that he would not have cared to be an institution. It is not Shakespeare the institution we want to appeal to this morning, but Shakespeare the man—or in this room, perhaps, Shakespeare the boy. For I cannot in this room forget that when he was here in the flesh it was not in the capacity of professor—that in all probability he was ‘agin the government.’ I am sure the boy Shakespeare had a shining morning face : I can well believe that he crept unwillingly to school. Wide as his mature sympathies were, embracing thieves and ruffians as well as honest men, I doubt whether they ever included schoolmasters. And if there are any of his characters to whom he is disposed to be a little unkind, it is surely such men as the pedant Holofernes or the formal Malvolio, ‘an affectioned ass that cons state without book and utters it by great swarths.’ Collectively we schoolmasters must admit that we belong to the most unpopular of professions, though individually we may console ourselves with the reflection that we have been given more generous



and undeserved affection than we can easily imagine to come the way of the average trade or profession. But Shakespeare at any rate has not reversed for us the world's verdict.

That fact shall not deter me from making my appeal to him to-day. Thinking of his practice of literature, what sort of counsel can I draw from the oracle in this matter of essay-writing? Well, for one thing, to care for the beauty of English prose. That shall be one virtue I will add to the list I have already given you. Shakespeare, let us remember, was a great master of English prose as well as of English verse. And when he had something quite simple to say in prose, how exquisitely beautiful he made the words by deft arrangement and harmonious modulation. Listen once more to Antonio's letter to Bassanio.

'Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and since, in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I [it wasn't grammar that Shakespeare cared about!], if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure: if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.'<sup>1</sup>

Then, for a second thing, to care for the richness and variety and colour and strength of English speech. As I think of Shakespeare's amazing vocabulary and reflect what a magnificent instrument such a language must be in the hands of one who has anything to say to his fellow-men, how can I help being ashamed of the poverty-stricken dialect of the average modern Englishman, the product of our schools and univer-

<sup>1</sup> *Merchant of Venice*. Act iii, Scene 2.

sities of to-day? Poor and mean as our vocabulary is apt to be, it is made still worse by the way in which imperfect knowledge blurs the distinction between words and blunts their significance.

Thirdly, where can we go better than to Shakespeare for an example of what Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has called 'the paradox of style'—the truth that personality makes style, and yet the great writer seldom thrusts his personality upon us? On the one hand, Shakespeare is the most impersonal of all our writers, and, as Sir Sidney Lee has shown us, it is almost impossible to deduce a single fact of autobiography from all his works. On the other hand, nearly every line he wrote is stamped with his unmistakable individuality.

Fourthly, the oracle will bid me do what I can to cultivate and elevate the imagination. Need I stay to prove that? The sole value of our Tercentenary lies in its witness that we pay supreme honour to poetic imagination, and that in the realm of imagination the proudest of all English conquests has been won.

But, again, the oracle will warn me—and you see that I am bringing you back to the text from which I started—that, however much I cultivate the imagination, I am to restrain its flights continually by never losing hold of common sense, never forgetting the solid earth on which pupil and teacher alike have got to live. That surely is the meaning of the oracle's smile, which, even as we watch it, widens into a laugh 'broad as ten thousand beeves at pasture.' And one response more, before I close, I am tempted to draw. You will find it in the Epilogue to the *Tempest*. Prospero—yes, after all there was one schoolmaster of

whom Shakespeare thought with sympathy, but that was because he broke his wand and doffed his gown and drowned his book—and he was not a schoolmaster by choice, but only a scholar : ‘ Me, poor man !—my library was dukedom large enough ’—Prospero sadly acknowledges that he wants ‘ spirits to enforce, art to enchant.’ He relies no longer on his own skill ; he trusts in the goodwill of others. He is dependent on the favour of his audience, and he asks for their forgiveness—as the schoolmaster, when all is done, must ask for the forgiveness of his pupils—and as I ask for yours.



## IV

### THE ESSAY IN JUNIOR FORMS<sup>1</sup>

THE word 'essay' is an unfortunate one, if to any reader it merely connotes the evolving of weary platitudes on an abstract subject, or the solemn setting forth of 'pros' and 'cons' alternately in a discussion in which neither teacher nor pupil can conceivably take any living interest. But I prefer it to 'composition,' which, from its etymological meaning of 'putting together,' has something dull and mechanical about it. 'Essay,' meaning originally 'an attempt,' may be condemned as vague, but at the least it seems to suggest something personal and creative, and it has noble and inspiring literary associations, whatever its scholastic associations may be.

That the scholastic associations are not always encouraging I should be one of the first to admit. Many of us have dreary recollections of days when we were asked to make bricks without straw. It is astonishing, yet it may be true, that there are schools where the same old uninspired and uninspiring round of themes that we remember twenty, thirty, forty years ago is still pursued. And the story (was it?) of the seven examiners who put seven different school essays in seven different orders, cited recently by a correspondent of the *Preparatory Schools Review* does not seem altogether incredible.

<sup>1</sup> *Preparatory Schools Review*, Feb. 1924.

I venture to maintain, however, that the school essay is not to be hastily condemned on the strength of such stories and recollections. First, before I attach any weight to the seven different examination orders, I should like to know more about the examiners. Too often it seems to be assumed that any English schoolmaster is capable of judging an English essay. The assumption is quite untenable. It is just as absurd as to suppose that every schoolmaster is competent to mark papers in Greek or Mathematics or Natural Science. It is not indeed necessary that every one who examines a school essay should have taken an English Tripos. But it is necessary that he should have more than average knowledge of the English language and literature, good taste and sound judgment ; and these qualifications are at least as rare as proficiency in mathematics or the tongues. If even with competent judges it should still remain true that orders in the essay examination will vary more than orders in an arithmetic paper, this is no sound reason for abolishing the essay as a part of all public competitive examinations, though it might conceivably be an argument for placing candidates in classes instead of attempting the exact appraisalment of marking. But I have little doubt that the difficulty of securing an agreement as to standard and relative merits has been much exaggerated. Further, nothing has had a worse influence on English education than the temptation to prefer for examinations a type of paper which is easy to mark. This is the kind of temptation which leads to history papers made up of questions that can be answered in three words—questions that test the memory alone and therefore directly encourage ‘cramming.’

If I were asked to name the part of my work which, in a long experience, I had found most enjoyable for myself and (so far as I could judge) most profitable to my pupils, I should choose the English essay. And though my direct experience of teaching has been almost wholly with Fifth and Sixth Forms, I have repeatedly examined essay-work belonging to all the earlier stages, and I am convinced that the merits which I claim for this study, when it is intelligently pursued, belong to the earlier stages quite as much as to the later.

The intelligent teaching of the essay in the early stages involves the use of a variety of exercises and methods by which the pupil can be trained in expression and self-expression. We are to aim at increasing his vocabulary and making his use of words, both orally and in writing, more accurate ; he is to be taught to avoid solecisms and awkward or ungrammatical constructions ; he is to be shown the meaning and use of paragraphs ; he is to learn how to consult books ; he is to be encouraged to think a question out for himself, and shown how to develop an argument logically ; finally, he is to be helped to set out his matter attractively and euphoniously. All this may sound ambitious. It certainly goes beyond the average practice, but not beyond the practice of the best teachers in this subject.

One word of caution about ' how not to do it.' Are there still schools where the teacher of English composes, or adopts from a manual, a ' model essay ' for the class to read, mark, learn and digest ? Not long ago I read in a school magazine an account of three boys who went up from the same private school to take



a public school entrance examination. They had written essays on 'A Day in the Country,' and had been in due course furnished with a model essay on this time-honoured theme. It began, 'The sun was shining brightly. Overhead the larks were singing gaily in a sky of blue. At our feet the flowers were nodding their graceful heads,' and continued in a similar strain through the bees, and the trees, and the breeze. The examiner also was only too familiar with this essay, and, not wishing to read it again, he offered a choice of five subjects—(1) A Bookshop, (2) What is Courage? (3) Climbing a Mountain, (4) Dreams, (5) Robinson Crusoe. Alec chose No. 4, and started off: 'I dreamt I had a day in the country. The sun was shining. The larks were all up in the blue sky singing for all they were worth, and the flowers too, nodding their graceful heads at our feet.' Bertram chose No. 3, and began dramatically: 'Let us climb a mountain said Jhon hartily no replied Tom it is to much like work let us have a walk in the country. The sun was bright the larkes singing gayly overhead. . . . ' Charles wasted time. He began to write about Robinson Crusoe: 'Robinson ran away from home. The sun was sh—.' Then he changed his mind and started afresh on No. 1: 'For bookshops it is necessary to go to towns, their are plenty of bookshops in towns but their not many bookshops in the country. Last year I had a day in the country. The sun was shining. . . . ' Here we may leave the three essayists, and leave the reader to draw the moral which the examiner doubtless drew.

It may be necessary for the schoolmaster to set occasionally an essay on a general subject, such as the five

mentioned above, to be done without guidance, in preparation for the ordeal of a Common Entrance Examination ; but this should be the exception rather than the rule. Very little is learnt by continual practice in writing on general themes ; a gradual falling off, an increasing staleness, is often the result instead of progress. What is wanted is a great variety of exercises which will maintain interest and freshness.

### SOME PRACTICAL COUNSELS

(1) Instead of asking for a whole essay every time, ask sometimes for the construction of *a single paragraph*. Give some simple, yet not too hackneyed or obvious, maxim or reflection which the class are to develop or illustrate in a single paragraph of a dozen lines.

(2) Impress upon the class the principle of *the unity of the paragraph*, by asking them to express in a single sentence the drift of a paragraph in their history book or some other book they are reading. Or, ask the class to pick out the 'topic' sentence in each of several successive paragraphs of a careful writer.

(3) After choosing an essay-subject, ask for two very short paragraphs—a suitable opening and a suitable conclusion. Glance rapidly at these, or ask a number of boys to read out what they have written ; and criticize and compare (or ask the class to criticize) the results.

(4) Never set an essay with a *vague title*. The title should always indicate clearly what is wanted.

(5) Read aloud a narrative poem, and ask for a *reproduction of the story* in prose. A discussion of differences natural to stories in prose and verse may usefully follow.

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(6) Never ask for an essay on 'Football,' but ask for a report of a single match or of a scouting expedition.

(7) Better still, because of the training in accurate observation involved, is the report of a field-day of a Naturalists' Club. Stress is laid on such reports at Dartmouth, where the teaching of English has been particularly successful.

(8) Get the class to make lists of words, as to the meaning of which they feel hazy, from two or three pages of their reading-book. Discuss the meanings in class, with a good dictionary for arbiter.

(9) In a prose-book, ask for lists of words which could *not* be used in poetry. In poetry, ask which words would be unsuitable in prose and whether another word could be substituted.

(10) An exercise on adjectives. In a poem, or florid piece of prose, distinguish between essential, otiose, ornamental, proleptic epithets.

(11) Tell a story of a neat repartee. Boswell's *Johnson* is a good quarry for such stories. Ask the class to write out the story from memory, and to explain the repartee as they would explain it to someone who had missed the point. Or, pictures in *Punch* may be used as material for this exercise.

(12) Read the first part of a short story. Ask the class to finish it out of their own heads.

(13) *A letter* is an excellent exercise. Note that the writer should always have in mind a definite person or definite persons to whom his letter is addressed. It is generally best to prescribe a definite topic as well.

(14) *A dramatic dialogue* is another good variation. If an attempt is made to mark the difference between



the two speakers in the dialogue by a difference in their manner of arguing, a good lesson in style will be provided.

(15) Hold *a debate* on some subject of current politics. Ask afterwards for a written précis of the debate.

(16) Another subject for debate : historical characters, or policies of statesmen in the history which is being read ; or, characters in a drama—*e.g.* How far are we meant to sympathize with Macbeth or Lady Macbeth ?

(17) Never ask for a *paraphrase* of a long piece, but ask (sometimes on paper, sometimes orally) for the meaning in simpler language of a single line, or stanza, or sentence from an orator.

(18) Exercises for the correction of grammatical mistakes or solecisms should be sparingly used. We learn to write well by familiarity with good writing.

(19) Do not waste time in meticulous correction. A learner can only attend to a very few points in one exercise. Concentrate for a few weeks on some special points that the class needs to learn.

(20) Mistakes in *Spelling* should not be ignored, but the correction should be made by the pupil himself after the wrong spelling has been crossed out.

(21) Teach the importance of *relevancy*. Good-natured crediting of marks for irrelevant information, whether in essays or history-papers, under the idea that industry should be encouraged, is a mistaken kindness. It encourages reckless fluency, and discourages the boy who tries conscientiously to stick to the point.

(22) The most common and the most fatal mistake

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in the teaching of the Essay is to make no use at all of good literature.

I have already exceeded even that liberal allowance of 'points' that used to be tolerated in, or expected from, preachers north of the Tweed. Let me conclude by giving one example of the intensive study of a short passage from a great author as an aid to youthful essay-writing.

### FROM 'JANE EYRE,' CH. XII

The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely; I walked fast till I got warm, and then I walked slowly to enjoy and analyse the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation. It was three o'clock; the church bell tolled as I passed under the belfry; the charm of the hour lay in its approaching dimness, in the low-gliding and pale-beaming sun. I was a mile from Thornfield, in a lane noted for wild roses in summer, for nuts and blackberries in autumn, and even now possessing a few coral treasures in hips and haws, but whose best winter delight lay in its utter solitude and leafless repose. If a breath of air stirred, it made no sound here; for there was not a holly, not an evergreen to rustle, and the stripped hawthorn and hazel bushes were as still as the white, worn stones which causewayed the middle of the path. Far and wide, on each side, there were only fields, where no cattle now browsed; and the little brown birds, which stirred occasionally in the hedge, looked like single russet leaves that had forgotten to drop.

1. Ask for a suitable title for the paragraph (*e.g.* A Winter Afternoon Walk).

2. Ask for a single sentence containing the drift of the paragraph. ['My walk took me along a lonely road, bordered with leafless hedges, and with fields on either side, strangely still in the frosty air and level light of the winter afternoon.']

3. Give a very brief account of the writer and book from which the extract is taken. Explain the significance of the passage in the novel—the quiet moment of suspense before an event of great importance in the heroine's life (the first meeting with Rochester).

4. The term 'orchestration' has sometimes been applied to the construction of a passage of beautiful and musical prose. It suggests something rather more elaborate than we have here; but we may notice the effect of the short simple clauses at the opening of each sentence, the gradual swelling of sound, and the quiet ending.

5. Is any use made of *alliteration*?

6. Collect the *epithets*. Are any of them striking, and why? What touches of *colour* are there in the scene?

7. Are there any metaphors or similes? Are there any unusual words?

8. Is there anything in the description to fix the part of the country in which the scene is laid?

9. There is not wind enough to twirl

The one red leaf, the last of its clan,

That dances as often as dance it can,

Hanging so light, and hanging so high,

On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Illustrate some of the differences between poetry and prose by a comparison of these lines from Coleridge's *Christabel* with the last sentence of the passage from *Jane Eyre*.

10. Set the passage to be learnt by heart: it will easily and quickly be committed to memory after the preliminary study suggested above.

11. Describe the same walk on a Spring day. Or, Describe the scene in verse (either blank verse or rhyme).



## V

### WORDS <sup>1</sup>

YOU may remember that when Polonius asked Hamlet what he was reading he received the reply—' Words, words, words ! ' The phrase expresses what most of you feel sometimes—some of you perhaps very often—about books. You want life, action, reality, and you complain that the schoolmaster puts you off with lifeless print—' Words, words, words.'

Books ! 'tis a dull and endless strife :  
 Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
 How sweet his music ! on my life  
 There's more of wisdom in it.  
 And hark ! how blithe the throstle sings,  
 He too is no mean preacher :  
 Come forth into the light of things,  
 Let Nature be your teacher. . . .  
 Enough of Science and of Art :  
 Close up those barren leaves ;  
 Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
 That watches and receives.

The feeling is not peculiar to youth and school-days : it will accompany you out into the grown-up world. There are pressing problems of poverty, for instance. We appoint a Royal Commission. It hears witnesses, it collects reams of statistics ; then after a lapse of years there is a majority report in a blue book, and a minority report in a blue book, or perhaps it was in a

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered at Clifton College, October 8, 1911.

book of another colour—' Words, words, words.' Or, there is a great upheaval in the world of labour, and a national strike producing widespread loss. Again, there must be a Commission, and meetings of congresses, and letters and pamphlets and leading-articles. Go where we will, we cannot escape from the tyranny of words.

It is just as well that you should realize that you do not escape from words by escaping from literature. If there is a newspaper, for instance, that reflects the great mundane movement and is innocent of all undue dependence on literature, I suppose it is the *Daily Telegraph*. It is, or always used to be, provided for your solace during the extremely unpleasant interval of waiting in the barber's shop. I feel that the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*, as Matthew Arnold called them, have their finger—I mean their paw—upon the great mundane movement, and may be trusted to keep you in contact with undiluted life. Well, I open my *Daily Telegraph*, and what do I find? It is a few days after the Railway Strike. There is a column headed with seductive alliteration, ' By the Silver Sea,' and a paragraph headed ' Brighton,' and there I read : ' The influx of visitors received some check during the period of the strike, but since the ordinary conditions of locomotion have been restored the traffic has given indications of recovering its normal proportions.'<sup>1</sup> ' Ordinary conditions'—' normal proportions'—words, words ! ' Sir,' said Dr. Johnson in an often-quoted sentence, ' let us take a walk down Fleet Street.' I

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from memory and may not be *verbatim et literalim* : but I do not think I have done injustice to the writer's exuberant verbosity.

wondered whether the writer of that precious paragraph had ever responded to the invitation of the gentleman whom he would call 'the great lexicographer.' Certainly he had never got as far as Brighton: he had written his column inside the Fleet Street office, and I think you will agree that he was magnificently rewarded at the rate of a penny a line.

And now let me confront you with the astounding pretensions of literature. 'Words,' says a great English essayist, 'are the only things that live for ever.' It is true, if you come to think of it, though I admit that at a first reading the statement seemed to me an exaggeration. What Hazlitt had in his mind was the same thing that Horace expressed in his famous '*Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona.*' That the memories of Achilles and Agamemnon live on among men is entirely due to the poet Homer: there were warriors as great in the times before them, but their memory has perished because they lacked a sacred bard. But there is a loftier sense in which Hazlitt's assertion is literally true.

Do not think it an irrelevance or a mere quibble if I quote to you in this connexion the great saying of Scripture—'Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but *My Word* shall not pass away.' What is meant here by the Word of God? The Logos—the expression of the thought of God. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' And when the thought of God is expressed in the life of Christ we are told that 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.'

And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds,



In loveliness of perfect deeds  
More strong than all poetic thought.

This is the Word at its highest—the perfect expression of the Thought that made the Universe. Clearly we are not always to think of words as the opposite of action—the old Thucydidean antithesis of λόγῳ μὲν—ἔργῳ δέ. There is another sense, and it is the highest, in which the antithesis disappears—Word, Speech, Logos, Thought, Act, they are all one thing.

There is a vile phrase one comes across in reviews—that somebody or other is ‘an artist in words.’ When Mr. Arnold Bennett the other day wanted to eulogize Mr. Chesterton, he said that Mr. Chesterton’s skill consisted in ‘seizing the golden word and planking it down with a rollicking bang.’ That is apparently the art of the twentieth century. In the old days the Pot called the Kettle black; now, you observe, they call each other golden. Perhaps that is what is meant by the yellow press. Think, by way of contrast, of the Greek poet Sophocles. He was ‘an artist in words’ if you like, but in what a different sense! He did not throw them about like splashes of paint. ‘Ornament,’ says his latest interpreter, ‘is reduced to the lowest dimensions; for the lines and planes of the composition are the Ornament. In all the seven plays there are only some half-dozen formal similes; and even these are brief, subdued, not enriched and heightened for their own sake. Language produces its effects by reserve. . . .’ Mr. Mackail dwells on this ‘pre-eminent sense of language; a sense that makes Sophocles deal with language as a thing too precious to waste. Just this keen, exquisite sense of language, of the potency and inexhaustible significance of the

word, is always present with him. In the *Oedipus at Colonus* the power of the word—‘the little word,’ *σμικρὸς λόγος*—is a recurrent note. *Language, to one who had been working in it with exquisite truth and delicacy for half a century, has become something awful.* Oedipus traces his exile and misery to a little word. A little word pledges Theseus and the whole power of Athens. In the most splendid speech of the play, that of Oedipus on the triumph of Time, the little word once more is the power which shatters alliances and brings kingdoms to ruin.’<sup>1</sup>

Another famous saying about words comes into my mind. It is an old saying of Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century philosopher. ‘Words are wise men’s counters, but they are the money of fools.’ (Perhaps that is why so many people *clip* them!) What did he mean by that? He meant that wise men know the meaning of the words they use: they can give you a clear definition of them: there is no ambiguity, no haziness in their minds: their thoughts are clear, and they manipulate words in their argument as the player at chess manipulates the pieces on the board. But the foolish person never thinks out the words he uses: he repeats phrases parrot-like: in religion and in politics he uses the catchwords of his sect or party without any clear understanding of their meaning; instead of meeting his opponents in argument, he ties on to them some label of as unpleasant a sound as he can find, and so succeeds in creating a prejudice against them. The truth triumphs in the end, let us hope, but ignorance and confusion of ideas may indefinitely postpone its triumph. ‘Words

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Greek Poetry*, p. 150.

are wise men's counters, but they are the money of fools.'

I have said all this because I wish to urge that it is worth while to take far more trouble than most of us take with the words that we use. The issues at stake are more serious than we are apt to think. The more carelessly we use our words, the more likely it is that they will tyrannize over us. And there is another point of view I want to press upon you. We in England are the heirs of a language which is one of the most beautiful and magnificent instruments of thought and expression produced in the whole history of the human race. Remember that it did not descend upon our nation ready-made. The Welsh, I believe, say that their language was spoken in Paradise; I should be sorry to think it; but at any rate I have never heard the same claim made on behalf of the English language. Nor did it emerge on the plain of Shinar from the confusion of tongues. No: this great and magnificent language is, so to say, the work of men's hands; it is an instrument fashioned, deliberately fashioned, for our use by the great men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England. It is that magnificent instrument which in the twentieth century we are running the risk of wantonly throwing away. What would you think of a statesman who proposed to throw away one after another of our fairest colonies for some paltry exchange or for nothing at all? It is hardly less an act of treason wilfully to throw away the priceless possession of hereditary English speech—the tongue that Shakespeare spake—and to take in exchange the wretched products of Californian tap-rooms or New York music-halls. Now it is quite true



that a living language must be always growing new words. It is only when a language is dead that we can write prose and verse in it precisely in the way which scholars use in Latin and Greek, confining themselves deliberately to the words, idioms and constructions of a few great writers. But it is also true that a living language is always in danger of that corruption which leads fast to decadence and death. It is not now for the first time that the English language has been in such danger, though on one side the danger is greater now than it has ever been before, because now for the first time the greatest mass of printed English is produced not for the educated classes, but for the millions of uneducated readers. But whenever the danger has arisen before, I believe you will find it has always been met by some great writer or writers harking back to our older English speech, steeping themselves in the strong fresh vigorous unspoilt English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries especially, and reproducing, sometimes deliberately, sometimes unconsciously, the old half-forgotten speech with its wonderful richness and dignity and musical quality. Charles Lamb, for instance, steeped himself in the Elizabethan dramatists, and though he did not write dramas but only prose, their effect upon his style was to make the *Essays of Elia* what you know they are—a perfect model of style for succeeding generations. De Quincey tells us of the marvellous power which some of the sentences in the Authorized Version of the Bible (1611) had upon his boyish imagination—the ‘crashing overture,’ for instance, to the grand chapter in Daniel—‘Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords.’ Well, De Quincey, in one

or two passages of his *English Mail-Coach* and of his *Autobiography*, carried English prose to a height of magnificence very seldom reached either before or since. Ruskin is, I think, on the whole, the greatest writer of English prose that ever lived ; and Ruskin knew his Bible almost by heart, and was a great student of some of the best of our earlier English prose. R. L. Stevenson, again, has told us how he trained himself by imitating the great prose-writers.

I want to give you two or three examples from which you may gain some idea of the beauty and strength and simplicity of English prose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the short time at my disposal I can only do what Sir Philip Sidney says the poet does : ' He doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the very first give you a cluster of grapes ; that, full of that taste, you may long to pass farther.'

My first example shall be from Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch. It is a passage that we are sure Shakespeare knew well, because he used it in his play of *Coriolanus*. It describes Coriolanus going into exile and seeking the house of his chief enemy at Antium ; and I want you to notice the great strength and nobility, and at the same time the great simplicity, of the language.

It was even twilight when he entered the city of Antium, and many people met him in the streets, but no man knew him. So he went directly to Tullus Aufidius' house, and when he came thither, he got him up straight to the chimney hearth, and sate him down, and spake not a word to any man, his face muffled over. They of the house spying him, wondered what he should be, and yet they durst not bid him rise. For ill-favouredly muffled and disguised as he was, yet there appeared a certain majesty



in his countenance and in his silence : whereupon they went to Tullus who was at supper, to tell him of the strange disguising of this man.

Tullus rose presently from the board, and coming towards him, asked him what he was, and wherefore he came. Then Martius unmuffled himself, and after he had paused awhile, making no answer, he said unto him : ' If thou knowest me not yet, Tullus, and seeing me, dost not perhaps believe me to be the man I am indeed, I must of necessity bewray myself to be that I am. I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thyself particularly, and to all the Volscs generally, great hurt and mischief, which I cannot deny for my surname of Coriolanus that I bear. For I never had other benefit nor recompense of the true and painful service I have done, and the extreme dangers I have been in, but this only surname : a good memory and witness of the malice and displeasure thou shouldest bear me. Indeed the name only remaineth with me : for the rest the envy and cruelty of the people of Rome have taken from me, by the sufferance of the dastardly nobility and magistrates, who have forsaken me, and let me be banished by the people. This extremity hath now driven me to come as a poor suitor to take thy chimney hearth, not of any hope I have to save my life thereby. For if I had feared death, I would not have come hither to have put my life in hazard : but pricked forward with desire to be revenged of them that thus have banished me, which now I do begin, in putting my person into the hands of their enemies. Wherefore, if thou hast any heart to be recked of the injuries thy enemies have done thee, speed thee now, and let my misery serve thy turn ; and so use it, as my service may be a benefit to the Volscs : promising thee, that I will fight with better good will for you, than I did when I was against you, knowing that they fight more valiantly who know the force of the enemy, than such as have never proved it. And if it be so that thou dare not, and that thou art weary to prove fortune any more : then am I also weary to live any longer. And it



were no wisdom in thee to save the life of him who hath been heretofore thy mortal enemy, and whose service now can nothing help nor pleasure thee.'

My next example is from John Bunyan. He was only a Bedfordshire tinker, you remember ; he had no education to speak of. But he knew his Bible certainly, and I think he also knew his *Faerie Queene*. Listen to the effect that such choice reading had upon his style. I have taken a passage from the description of the crossing of the river, near the end of the Second Part.

When days had many of them passed away, Mr. Despondency was sent for ; for a post was come, and brought this message to him : Trembling man ! these are to summon thee to be ready with thy King by the next Lord's day, to shout for joy for thy deliverance from all thy doubtings. And, said the messenger, that my message is true, take this for a proof : so he gave him the grasshopper to be a burden unto him.

Now Mr. Despondency's daughter, whose name was Much-afraid, said, when she heard what was done, that she would go with her father. Then Mr. Despondency said to his friends, Myself and my daughter, you know what we have been, and how troublesomely we have behaved ourselves in every company. My will and my daughter's is, that our desponds and slavish fears be by no man ever received, from the day of our departure for ever ; for I know that after my death they will offer themselves to others. For to be plain with you, they are ghosts which we entertained when we first began to be pilgrims and could never shake them off after. And they will walk about and seek entertainment of the pilgrims ; but for our sakes, shut ye the doors upon them. When the time was come for them to depart, they went to the brink of the river. The last words of Mr. Despondency were, Farewell, night ; welcome, day ! His daughter went through the river singing, but none could understand what she said.

I wish you could see in what an altered form that passage has lately been served up for your younger brothers and sisters in a *Children's Pilgrim's Progress*—that you might contrast the quaint and yet noble simplicity of the original with the crudity and violence of the twentieth-century 'improver.'

Let me give you just one more specimen of seventeenth-century prose—from the famous character of Lord Falkland in Clarendon's *History of the Great Rebellion*. The style is less simple than in the two previous extracts, but it is not very difficult, and I think you will be impressed by its rare nobility.

From the entrance into this unnatural war, his natural cheerfulness and vivacity grew clouded, and a kind of sadness and dejection of spirit stole upon him, which he had never been used to: yet being one of those who believed that one battle would end all differences, and that there would be so great a victory on one side, that the other would be compelled to submit to any conditions from the victor... he resisted those indispositions. But after the King's return from Brentford, and the furious resolution of the two Houses not to admit any treaty for peace, those indispositions which had before touched him, grew into a perfect habit of uncheerfulness; and he, who had been so exactly easy and affable to all men, that his face and countenance was always present, and vacant to his company, and held any cloudiness, and less pleasantness of the visage, a kind of rudeness or incivility, became, on a sudden, less communicable; and thence very sad, pale, and exceedingly affected with the spleen. In his clothes and habit, which he had minded before always with more neatness, and industry, and expense, than is usual to so great a soul, he was not now only incurious, but too negligent; and in his reception of suitors, and the necessary or casual addresses to his place, so quick, and sharp, and severe, that there wanted not some men (strangers to



his nature and disposition) who believed him proud and imperious ; from which no mortal man was ever more free. . . .

On the morning before the battle, as always upon action, he was very cheerful, and put himself into the first rank of the Lord Byron's regiment, then advancing upon the enemy, who had lined the hedges on both sides with musketeers ; from whence he was shot with a musket in the lower part of the belly ; and in the instant falling from his horse, his body was not found till the next morning ; till when, there was some hope he might have been a prisoner ; though his nearest friends, who knew his temper, received small comfort from that imagination. Thus fell that incomparable young man, in the four and thirtieth year of his age, having so much dispatched the true business of life, that the eldest rarely attain to that immense knowledge, and the youngest enter not into the world with more innocence : whosoever leads such a life needs be the less anxious upon how short warning it is taken from him.

I cannot close a lecture on such a subject without saying a word to you about one<sup>1</sup> who for the last thirty-five years did more than anyone else to set a high standard of *words* and *thought* among us and to make Clifton pre-eminent among the schools of England as the nursery of men of letters. Such was his own exquisite choice of words that if an inscription was wanted for the School Chapel, or for some address or gift on a special occasion, everybody, the Headmaster, his colleagues, his pupils, always felt that it was to him they must go to supply words that were worthy to be engraved and to live on for future generations to read. There are two monuments in

<sup>1</sup> Sidney T. Irwin, Assistant Master at Clifton College, 1876-1911.



Bristol Cathedral, those to Sidney Smith and to Hakluyt, and inscriptions in churches far away, that show how this gracious skill of his won recognition in the world outside our own walls. Those of you who were his pupils know the swift certainty with which he pounced upon any use of words in an essay to hide the poverty of thought—the lightning-like rapidity with which the covering was stripped off, and the mean body of thought underneath exposed to relentless scorn.<sup>1</sup> You know too his quickness to recognize a real thought or an apt word. But it will only be in years to come, if at all, that you will understand fully what some of the older among us are realizing now—that his was the mind which more than any other single mind during the long space of thirty years quickened and uplifted the whole life of Clifton, a never-failing fountain of wisdom and wit and eloquence and humour and courtesy and unselfish goodness to our whole commonwealth, and an inspiration to his friends, young and old, for the rest of their days.

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 47-48, for an account of S. T. Irwin's method. Many of his essay-notes are collected in Part II of my *Manual of Essay-Writing* (A. and C. Black, 1899; third edition, 1914). A selection of my own notes, written on the same plan for the Clifton Sixth between 1911 and 1920, is printed in the Appendix to the present volume.

## VI

### THE PARADOX OF STYLE: THE TEACHER'S PROBLEM<sup>1</sup>

You gods ! I prate,  
And the most noble mother in the world  
Leave unsaluted.

ONE after another, three or four of them, they repeated it, boys in a modern fifth form saying their repetition out of *Coriolanus*. Was there a misprint in the book ? No, there it was printed correctly—

And the most noble mother of the world—

but the unobservant eye of boyhood had changed the unfamiliar preposition into the familiar and by an alteration of two letters turned a line of pure gold into a commonplace expression of every day. 'O ! the little more and how much it is, and the little less and what worlds away !' I murmured to myself, and should probably have drifted, if the duty of the moment had not prevented me, into a meditation on the supreme and unanalyzable virtue of style. I pointed out the difference to the form, and I hope that one or two of them understood, or will understand in due time. To the rest the correction may have seemed pedantry, or Shakespeare's variation from the ordinary phrase the tiresome affectation of the literary man.

<sup>1</sup>*The School World*, Sept. 1917.

Did not Mr. Charles Whibley once say, 'There is nothing the public hates so much as style'? One is sometimes tempted to think he was right. And, oddly enough, I received in connexion with that same passage a confirmation of his view. For I discovered that one boy was using an edition which had 'expurgated' (*incredibile dictu*, but it is true!) the very lines that had led me to choose the piece for repetition:

O! a kiss  
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!  
Now, by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss  
I carried from thee, dear, and my true lip  
Hath virgin'd it e'er since.

Conceive, if you can, the mental and moral obliquity of that editor who found in the exquisite purity of Coriolanus's address to his wife—the very passage surely that led Mr. A. C. Bradley to end his delightful lecture on 'Coriolanus' with the remark that, however the hero might loathe and execrate the people, 'he was no more capable of injury or insult to a daughter of the people than Othello, or Chaucer's Knight, or Don Quixote himself'—something dangerous or unmeet for the ears and hearts of youths and maidens.

One of the best things in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's lectures on the Art of Writing<sup>1</sup> is the emphasis he lays on the paradox of style—that, whereas style is the expression of a writer's individuality—and that is why its virtue is unanalyzable and inimitable—there is nevertheless such a thing as a standard, and sound criticism is agreed to a wonderful extent as to the writers who possess the virtue of style in a supreme degree. The teacher of composition, if he is to be of

<sup>1</sup> *On the Art of Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 1916).



any great use to his pupils, must bear in mind both propositions simultaneously.

In old-fashioned manuals the tendency was to remember the second proposition to the exclusion of the first. It was the mistake of 'classicism' in art repeated on the humbler level of the school exercise. Rules of composition, deduced originally from the practice of great authors, but often repeated at second or third hand by those whose knowledge of the great masters was neither wide nor deep, bound the beginner. He was oppressed with a sense of the mystery of the art which he was asked to acquire. Worse still, rigid and arbitrary and complex rules of grammar were sometimes imposed upon him. Language was made to seem a difficult, but also a mechanical thing.

Then came a discovery which, perhaps, we owe to the never-to-be-forgotten *Essays of Elia* and to the charming autobiographical papers through which R. L. Stevenson made friends of all his readers more than through anything else—the discovery that style was the expression of a writer's personality. At long last the poet's counsel to himself, 'Look then in thine heart and write,' was seen to be applicable even to the schoolboy. Or perhaps I should rather say that it was a variation of this counsel. For the new preceptors were not commonly of an introspective turn. Their strength lay in their grasp of the material objective world. They had learnt from the methods of Kipling and G. W. Stevens. 'Open thine eyes,' they said to the schoolboy, 'look about, and set down what thou seest.' The result of the advice, admirably given in Mr. P. J. Hartog's and the late Mr. Townsend

Warner's books<sup>1</sup>—stimulating works which no teacher of young boys and girls should be without—has been a great improvement in the teaching of composition in the more elementary stages. There may still be schools which the movement has not reached. A writer in the *Times Educational Supplement*<sup>2</sup> tells us that he 'did' two essays in the third form, one of which was on 'Physical and Moral Courage'; one essay in the fourth, on 'Anything You Like'; none in the fifth, to the best of his memory; but a great many in the sixth, across one of which was written as sole comment the word 'balderdash.' But he admits that this experience was twenty-five years ago; let us hope that it would be exceptional now. On such evidence as comes within my reach I am disposed to believe that thousands of children have, through a better choice of subjects and the changed point of view of their teachers, discovered in themselves a faculty of observation and a power of expressing *choses vues* which must be a real delight to themselves and will be a source of delight to their friends also if they retain it in the letter-writing of subsequent years. And amid the outpouring from the Press of much deplorably feeble writing one hails with satisfaction a notable increase in the number of writers who have the power of reproducing simply, lucidly, and strikingly the scenes they have witnessed. One excellent example of this kind of work which I have lately come across I should like to take this opportunity of mentioning—Capt. C. E. W. Bean's *Letters from France*. That

<sup>1</sup> *The Writing of English*, by P. J. Hartog (Oxford, 1907).  
*On the Writing of English*, by G. Townsend Warner (Blackie, 1915).

<sup>2</sup> June 28, 1917.



letters so sound and sincere and unpretentious should have been written for a colonial newspaper, and that the Commonwealth of Australia should have appointed a man with these virtues of style its official reporter, seems to be a happy augury for the future of English. For our language is destined to become more and more what the English-speaking world outside the mother-country combines to make of it.

But the uses of description and narrative are not the only uses of speech ; and it is when we come to more ambitious purposes that we feel the inadequacy of some of the newer guides and methods. The construction of a reasoned argument in history or science or in moral or political philosophy, the lucid setting forth of a case, the preparation of a speech or sermon—no doubt these things are for the mature practitioner, not for the schoolboy. Yet if there is no training for them at school, the probability is that all but a gifted few will stumble long and badly before they get upon the right road to their goal. How is the teacher to help ? And where is he himself to find assistance for his task ?

Remembering still that our object is simply to help the essayist to express his own personality in his work, we shall be on our guard against attempting to do too much, against fixing too arbitrary ways of approach to the subject or methods of handling it. Yet experience shows that the learner does need a good deal of guidance in most cases—that mere practice does not necessarily lead to perfection, but often leads, on the contrary, to monotony and dullness and the repetition of stereotyped phrases. First and above all, there must be reading of the English classics, with some learning by heart of the best models, that the pupil



may insensibly acquire a larger vocabulary, an ear for rhythm, a distaste (by contrast) for all that is slipshod and vulgar in speech. Then there must be some study of the history of the language, at least unless the pupil is fortunate enough to be receiving at the same time a sound training in Greek, Latin, and French. Perhaps only an experienced schoolmaster knows how vague and blurred are the meanings of words in the mind of the average boy. A good style is simply impossible for anybody whose ignorance of the precise differences in the history, and therefore in the meaning and connotation, of words is such that he has no instinct for avoiding incongruous metaphors or associations. Thirdly, in the actual construction of the essay there is much to be learnt from the study of such a book as Mr. Classen's<sup>1</sup>—hints on good and bad types of sentences, openings and conclusions, transitions, the unity of the paragraph, and so forth. Again, the abler sort of boy or girl will derive both amusement and profit from reading the examples of errors of speech collected by the industrious and ingenious authors of *The King's English*. If it is not an outrage to propose to turn *Punch* into a school book, one is tempted to suggest that the gaiety of the classroom might be increased, and the utilities of the English lesson not diminished, by a selection from the newspaper cuttings which have delighted so many readers during the last few years.

And how far is the teacher to attempt to instil his or her own preferences of style? It may perhaps be comforting, and it is certainly salutary, to remember

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Style and Composition*, by E. Classen (Macmillan, 1917).

that in many cases youth is fully able to protect itself against the bias of its preceptors. Because we preach the virtues of a certain particular style, it does not follow that we have persuaded our pupils—no, not when the impress of our teaching is clearly visible in their productions. We may only be provoking a reaction which will follow in due course. Secondly, we shall do well to recall the words of one who was a shrewd observer as well as a great writer, Mark Pattison :<sup>1</sup>—‘ The last thing which a youthful taste learns is the might of simplicity. The more artificial the model, the more captivating to the tiro.’ We shall continually keep before our own eyes and our pupils’ the sovereign virtues of simplicity and sincerity ; but, remembering this natural inclination of youth towards the florid style, we shall seek to make the best of it, to guide it to good specimens of the kind, rather than simply to discourage it by unappreciative comment. We can point out where Macaulay or De Quincey or Ruskin falls short of the ideal ; we shall do better to notice more often where they have achieved real triumphs. When I was preparing a few years ago a little selection of ‘ purple patches ’ from the great orators, my old colleague, Mr. W. W. Asquith, sent me a long passage in monosyllables which he had just found in the *Life* of Sir James Paget—as a gentle intimation, I imagine, that this was the more excellent way. Since then Bishop Browne in his *Reminiscences* has given us one or two experiments in the same direction. In the now discarded ‘ philologies ’ of our childhood we used to be told that the ‘ monosyllabic ’ stage comes first, then the ‘ agglutinative,’ then the ‘ syn-

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. i. p. 135.



thetic' speech of civilized communities, destined in its turn to break up into 'analytic' forms. Do the preferences of the individual follow that imagined experience of the race? In a few more years, if I live and teach long enough, I may find myself practising and enjoining the practice of monosyllables. At present I am not prepared to adopt that platform, in spite of my admiration for such monosyllabic victories as :

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Yet I own that I was dismayed at the preference for ornate writing lately shown by that modern-side form which I have already quoted. An examiner had put side by side the two famous examples of simple and artificial speech which Macaulay long ago brought together in proof that even to Dr. Johnson it did not come natural to think in 'Johnsonese' :

When we were taken upstairs, a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed where one of us was to lie.—*Letter to Mrs. Thrale.*

Out of one of the beds on which we were to repose started up at our entrance a man black as a Cyclops from the forge.—*Journey to the Western Islands.*

Which sentence was the better, asked the examiner, and why? Not a few votes were cast in favour of the longer specimen as the more literary and dignified. Possibly such votes were merely given on a mistaken calculation that an examiner's preference was likely to be in favour of rhodomontade; but the choice was not less disquieting in its implied ignorance of the aim of literary art. I agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Hastings Crossley in the doctrine of his very interest-



ing pamphlet on *Style and Composition*,<sup>1</sup> that strength and sincerity are the chief virtues of style, and that he who aims first at beauty is likely to miss the more important things—and even to miss beauty itself.

But where is the teacher of composition himself to find help for his work? To know what advice to give, and to know when to refrain from advising, he needs his own taste and judgment to be trained and fortified by study of the great writers. The English dislike of scientific study is apt to result in the teacher being content with a very inadequate equipment for his task. He is inclined, if he has a genuine love of some things in literature, to credit himself with an instinctive taste for the best and to despise anything more than this as superfluous, or even as harmful pedantry. But even if a man's taste were perfect from the beginning (and it would be easy to show by examples from the great geniuses of our literature, beginning with Shakespeare and Milton, that this is never the case), it would still be only his preferences of which he could be sure. The catholicity which comes from learning to put ourselves at points of view that do not readily appeal to us is the last fruit of training. Yet the teacher needs it. Without it, he is liable to do harm by turning the talent of a pupil away from what may have been its true direction, or by sowing the seed of a lifelong prejudice against some author whom he himself has never comprehended and whom his pupil has never read. That is why I rejoice that some of the recent writers on composition have recalled attention so emphatically to the study of the great classics. *Vos*

<sup>1</sup> *Style and Composition*, by H. Crossley (National Home Reading Union, 1916).

*exemplaria . . . nocturna versate manu, versate diurna*—‘Study the great models by day and by night’—is the burden of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s lectures, and the counsel is the more noteworthy because it comes from a professor in some ways very modern and un-academic. It is the special merit of Mr. Crossley’s pamphlet that he has condensed into thirty pages so many stimulating criticisms and sound judgments on literature. Mr. Rannie<sup>1</sup> has brought wide reading, long meditation, and an analytic mind to bear upon a similar task. Mr. Classen has applied his study of the methods of the great masters to the practical problems of composition. The teacher of the subject was never so well supplied with guidance and encouragement as he is to-day.

<sup>1</sup> *The Elements of Style*, by D. W. Rannie (Dent, 1915).

## VII

### THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOLS <sup>1</sup>

I NEED not spend time in arguing that Shakespeare ought to be read in schools. The fact that we are met here this morning is a proof that we are agreed upon that point, and I do not wish to follow the example of those clergymen who lecture the scanty congregation of the faithful on the wickedness of non-attendance at church. Long ago Wordsworth put the fact that we 'speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake' in the very forefront of the 'titles manifold' which Englishmen can produce to show that they are of 'earth's first blood.' More than a century has passed since those words were written, but we echo them with all our hearts. Our pride is kindled as we recite them; and then it quickly turns to shame as we think how little use we make of our magnificent heritage—how little the average English boy or girl, the average

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at a Conference held in connexion with the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon, August 1914, Sir Sidney Lee presiding. It so fell that this, the opening paper of the Conference, was read on the morning of the fateful day, August 4. The thunderbolt had not yet fallen, but the air was tense, and the thoughts of my audience must have been strangely distracted. My own had fled from Shakespeare to Wordsworth's sonnet of September 1802 :

Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood ;  
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,  
The coast of France—the coast of France how near !  
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.



English man or woman, knows or cares about that proud possession.

When schoolmasters are charged with any failure, they are apt to reply that the true offenders are the parents of their pupils. But here at least is a case where that defence is impossible. If Shakespeare is a matter of indifference, if his book is sometimes at any rate a thing detested, how shall the school escape the blame? Are we to admit that teaching of necessity invests the subject taught with painful associations? In that case let us by all means keep Shakespeare out of our curriculum; and every other subject, too, that comes home to the bosoms of men, and not merely to their business.

But I hope that none of us who has taken the profession of teaching for his or her own is at all inclined to fall back upon that counsel of despair. We have, all of us, I trust, some memory to hearten us, if not of our own success, at least (and that is far better) of someone who taught us in days gone by, and taught us not to hate poetry, but to love it—someone whose own evident enjoyment of the poetry and anxiety that we should share it inspired us with the feeling that there was more in the text than met our eye at first sight—someone whose fine sympathetic reading of a great line went on sounding in our delighted brain, and awoke us to the consciousness of the music that was latent in the printed letters—someone perhaps whose rendering of a simple but pregnant line like that five times repeated 'never' of Lear's last speech about Cordelia—

Never, never, never, never, never—  
made us suddenly aware that what to our ignorance had seemed of little meaning was simply charged with

overwhelming significance—someone perhaps whose quick adaptation of some only half-understood utterance in a comedy to the circumstances of the moment, yes, even to the circumstances of the classroom, gave us a new insight into the fine rapier-like play of Shakespearean wit—‘Alas! poor Yorick! A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy! . . . Where be your gibes now? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the schoolroom on a roar?’

Such memories, if we have them, we do well to cherish, not simply as the acknowledgment of a debt to those to whom we lie under lifelong obligation, but because they should serve us for an inspiration and an ideal. Not to stand between literature and the pupil, like a dull introduction or a still duller commentary, but to smooth away any difficulties that prevent great literature from making its own appeal to the child—this is to be our aim.

Difficulties there are, we do not deny it. ‘Interest in literature,’ it has been said, ‘is at bottom an interest in life.’ And it is a good saying, worth keeping in mind; for in proportion as we keep it in our thoughts, our love of literature will be something good and wholesome, ever weaving for us invisible threads of sympathy to bind us to our fellow-men, and not the selfish luxury of the artistic nature, ‘housed in a dream at distance from the kind.’ But if interest in literature is an interest in life—if great literature, as a more famous saying puts it, is ‘a criticism of life,’ how shall it make its appeal to those who have no experience of life? The question is a reasonable one; and those who teach literature to the young—still more often those who criticize the teachers of literature



to the young for their ill-success—are apt to forget how limited is the child's experience of life, how impossible it is that he should understand many things that later years will of themselves make plain. Yet life is just what the child *is* interested in. As the teacher of history finds he has no difficulty about making his subject interesting so long as he treats it as the story of heroic deeds, so long as he presents a series of portraits of famous men and women, a series of pictures of places made memorable by sieges and battles, a series of pageants in which figures move before us in the costumes of their period with an appropriate historical background, so the teacher of literature finds that his subject, too, awakens a response so long as he is careful to present it, not as material for paraphrase or analysis, not as material for linguistic study, but as a series of pictures of life. True, the child has no experience of life. And yet how soon he begins

Filling from time to time his humorous stage,  
With all the persons down to palsied age,  
That life brings with her in her equipage,  
As if his whole vocation  
Were endless imitation.

Hence the instantaneous appeal which such a passage as 'The Seven Ages of Man' makes to him. Here is the teacher's supreme opportunity. The child has not experience enough or knowledge enough to know why 'The Seven Ages of Man' is great art, and why the Seven Ages as they might be represented on the cinematograph by a commonplace photographer would be bad art; but it is going to make a vast difference to him whether he is more accustomed in his



early years to the one or the other. Let him live with the lovely pictures and splendid music of great poetry 'like a breeze from healthful places,' and his mind shall be stored with noble images, he will grow up with his whole nature enriched and made individual by the sights and sounds to which you have accustomed him : 'Beauty born of murmuring sound shall pass into his face.' Accustom him instead to the common pictures of the common newspapers and the common theatres, and his mind will inevitably draw its colour and tone from that it feeds on ; and 'each day brings its petty dust his soon-choked soul to fill.'

To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time ;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.

A second difficulty—the only other that I must touch upon at this time—is the difficulty of the language. That is very real. No fact in the literary history of England is more striking perhaps than the rapidity with which the English language of the present day is moving away from the English language of our forefathers and of all our literature. There are many reasons for this—the great changes in the external aspect and conditions of life, the multitude of modern inventions, their prominence in our lives and their influence on our conversation and the metaphors we use, the dispersion of the English race over new continents, and the reaction of the language of the daughter peoples upon the language of the parent community, the influence of cheap printing in giving wide currency to the newer forms of popular speech.

Even to a modern grown-up audience the language of Shakespeare is full of difficulty. Dr. Brandl, in his address to the British Academy, mentioned as one reason that favoured the popularity of Shakespeare in Germany the fact that, as the German translations of Shakespeare are modern, the average German finds less difficulty in understanding the text of Shakespeare as it is presented to him than the average Englishman. In preparing a text of the German Shakespeare for the general reader, Dr. Brandl found that many pages did not require a single footnote by way of interpretation. On the other hand, as against this difficulty of the language there are two things to be remembered. One is that reading aloud causes many difficulties to disappear. The general sense of a dialogue becomes clear when we read aloud, though we may still miss the force of particular words. Secondly, the language of everyday speech—and therefore of a great deal of dramatic dialogue—in the seventeenth century is wonderfully close after all to what we might suppose to be the most modern idiom. This reflection was forced upon me the other day when I happened to be reading a letter of Oliver Cromwell written just after his victory at Dunbar—‘I think the Presbyterian party has done their do.’ And, once again, it is the difficulty that makes the teacher’s opportunity. What a miserably poor vocabulary the modern Englishman is as a rule contented to use! I know that our dictionaries—those which we are constantly being urged, as the opportunity of a lifetime, to live with for seven days free of charge—continue to grow at a pace that is almost alarming. The other day a friend of mine had to choose a new dictionary for a



local institution. That morning he had come across the word 'epidiascope' in the announcement of a lecture, so he tested the dictionaries submitted to his inspection by the new word, and advised the purchase of the volume in which he found it duly recorded and defined. But in spite of the amazing growth of new scientific terms, it may well be doubted whether the average Englishman of the middle or upper class has as large a vocabulary in daily use as his father or grandfather had. The reaction against the verbosity that we associate with Dr. Johnson's literary style has perhaps gone a little too far. We are most of us so afraid of long words, except of the new scientific words, even in formal speeches, that we are apt to reduce our sentences to the monotonous level of the verse that Pope censured, the 'ten low words' that 'creep in one dull line.' It is a very salutary corrective of this tendency to learn by heart a great speech of Shakespeare, with his exuberant delight in 'the glory of words.' And I at least should find here a sufficient reason, if there were no other, for the study of Shakespeare in schools.

But 'O most gentle pulpit!'—the word of Rosalind, or it may be of Spedding, has for some time been sounding reproachfully in my ears—'What tedious homily have you wearied your parishioners withal, and never cried, "Have patience, good people!"' You have had more than enough of general principles, and if your patience is not already exhausted you would like to know if I have any practical suggestions to make. And here I confess that I feel rather like the Needy Knife-grinder when the Friend of Humanity pressed him for details—



'Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!' But from the reproach of Rosalind I fly for consolation to the words of Portia—'If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.' And I will not apologize for having tried to lay down some general principles about our aims. For it is my conviction that if we keep these steadily in view in our teaching, methods may almost be left to take care of themselves; whilst if we lose sight even for a moment of our aims, our methods may be warranted by high educational authority to be the best in the world, and yet our teaching will be dull and lifeless and uninspiring.

First, then, it is quite unnecessary to say that at the moment when we begin to teach a play our own knowledge of it, our own interest in it, must be something fresh and living? It is not enough that the play is familiar. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that we are liable to be taken off our guard. We had read the play so often, we had seen it, we had been examined in it, and had taught it and examined others in it, and we thought we knew it so well. And the very first day an enquiring member of the class may put a question which we find we cannot answer simply because our knowledge has lost something of its freshness. This has happened to myself: I hope it has not happened to any of my audience: but I appear before you, like the drunken man on the temperance platform, as 'the awful warning.'

Secondly, we want the whole class, as soon as pos-

sible, and before they begin any detailed study, to get some idea of the play as a whole—to appreciate the plot and movement, and the part taken by the principal characters. Let us read through the whole play in class in the first week's lessons, assigning parts to the members of the class, changing the rôles pretty frequently to give everybody a turn, but quietly using some foresight to assign the important parts to those who are likely to do them the least injustice. This preliminary rapid reading I take to be essential, whether we are dealing with a young class or an advanced class. The chief difference will be that with an advanced class, if time presses, we may be content with having part of the first reading done in preparation at home.

When we pass from the preliminary reading to detailed study, the first essential is that the teacher should be quite clear in his own mind about the amount of time at his disposal. The choice of method should be made to depend entirely upon that. Do not let us suppose that either rapid 'extensive' reading or slow 'intensive' reading is necessarily either good or bad, dull or inspiring. Everything depends on the teacher, his own temperament, and his own capacity. There can be no doubt whatever that, under the influence partly of methods traditional in the teaching of the classics, and partly of the practice of public examining bodies, the general tendency in this country has hitherto been to devote too much of the year to a single play; and that here we have one of the main reasons why Shakespeare teaching in schools has been so unfruitful in the way of literary taste and enthusiasm. On the other hand, some of the



best and most inspiring literary lessons ever given have been lessons in which some fine scholar has concentrated his own attention and that of his pupils on a short passage—bringing a wealth of illustration to bear upon its details, and revealing the crowd of unexpected beauties that await the discovery of anyone who will take the trouble to read carefully and with an alert but reverent mind.

In the reaction from the old method of burying Shakespeare under mountains of archaeological, philological, and textual notes, we run some danger of substituting a shallow impressionism for more serious study. There is no necessary connexion between interest and impressionism or between dullness and study. We need to be reminded, I think, that in the parallel case of history it was the very historian in whose pages we continually find the name of 'Dryasdust' used as a label<sup>1</sup> for the uninspired and uninspiring chronicler, who also invented that very unexpected definition of genius as 'the transcendent capacity of taking trouble.' No man disliked dull pedantry more than Carlyle: he equally disliked hasty impressions and glib superficial speech. Do not let us consent to make the study of English literature a 'soft option' in our schools and universities. Those who fondly imagine that they are awakening interest by the easy process of avoiding the study that requires patient thought are likely to find that the interest of their pupils evaporates quickly and leaves little behind. The surest way of being interested in a thing is to work at it.

You may feel that I am talking as if the choice of

<sup>1</sup> Scott invented 'Dryasdust,' but Carlyle adopted the term.



method rested with the teacher. It does not, you may say : it is imposed upon him in England by external examining bodies. I fear there is only too much truth in this. Yet it is not lost labour to talk as if we were in Utopia and were free to choose. Examinations will only be improved through the teachers knowing what they want.

Now of the infinity of things that may be studied in a play of Shakespeare, can we lay down any order of importance ? Roughly, I think, we may ; though the order must not be so rigid as to leave no freedom of play to the teacher's own tastes and capacity. First, we may say, the plot must be grasped in all its essentials. We begin by observing the skill with which the opening scenes are contrived, to introduce the characters and make clear the situation, and we trace the connexion between scene and scene as the play proceeds. Secondly, the class must clearly individualize the characters. The teacher's main business will be to assist this process, not by supplying the class with an assortment of ready-made labels, nor by inviting them to read an introduction, but by calling attention to passages in which the *dramatis personæ* throw light upon their own or each other's qualities, and especially by eliciting discoveries through the Socratic method. We may take it for granted that a pupil's interest in a subject, and his confidence in his own power to do something with it and get something out of it, will be doubled from the moment that he has succeeded in making a discovery that you and he recognize as worth the making.

Third, we may place the study of the language. But by this I do not mean philological study in the

narrow sense : I mean rather such study as is necessary to bring out the force of metaphors and similes, the beauty of the rhythm, the magic of the words. The learning by heart of great passages is the most essential part of this study. But that it is not the whole every teacher who has listened for his sins to a class saying repetition knows to his cost. 'To write and read comes by nature,' we are assured on high authority, but the rule has so many exceptions that the prudent teacher will do well to ignore it, and to 'intimate reading *aloud*' to his class whether 'the spirit of humours' does it or not.<sup>1</sup> Let us tolerate no slovenly slurrings of the word or deviations from the text, and use such offences as must needs come to show that every alteration is an alteration for the worse.

Are we to employ paraphrase as an aid to the further study of the language ? Now I have thrown the apple of discord into the assembly ; and at the risk of seeming to mix my mythology, I suggest that it is 'Atalanta's better part' to pick it up. My own opinion is that, though no poetry can be represented at all adequately by a prose paraphrase, we get nearer to the appreciation and intelligent enjoyment of great poetry than we can get in any other way by making the effort to express as much of the meaning as our own prose can convey. No classical scholar believes that he can adequately represent great lines of Virgil or Catullus in English prose. Why then do classical scholars, not merely those who are still young enough to have the fear of examination before their eyes, sedulously make the attempt and court the inevitable

<sup>1</sup> *Twelfth Night*, ii. v. 93.



failure? Because they know that the experiment is not wasted labour—that in trying it they are making discoveries for themselves all the time into the wealth of significance in their author. So long as we pursue paraphrase in this spirit, it should be an immense help to us. But it *is* laborious, and to some of our pupils it is certain to be irksome. And therefore I would add: Let us carefully refrain from applying it in the classroom to passages that are charged with high emotion. Let us run no risk of seeming to profane sacred mysteries by using them as materials for exercises in language.

In the fourth place I put the study of the metre. This is to be pursued with the least possible accumulation of technical terms and the least possible amount of arbitrary rules. The ear is to be trained diligently; and we are to think of the poet as one who wrote by an exquisite ear for musical sounds, and not by the cultivation of rules.

I have only touched the fringe of my subject; but it is time that I left it to others to tell of the method of study that experience has shown to be fruitful. If in my introductory remarks I have emphasized personality rather than method, I would not have you think that I support the view, too common among English schoolmasters, that the study of methods is useless, and that teaching, as well as reading and writing, comes by nature. If the experience of thirty years has taught me anything, it has taught me, not that methods are useless, but that they are so useful that one cannot learn too many. The one fatal thing for the schoolmaster is to run in a groove. Each new class, each new pupil almost, calls for a new method,



or at least some modification of an old one. That, I take it, is the secret of the usefulness of such congresses as this ; and if even the youngest among us is not infallible, I hope that even the oldest is not too old to learn.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With school performances of Shakespeare, and with what is even more valuable, the improvised acting of scenes in the classroom, this paper made no attempt to deal. Other members of the Conference, especially Mr. Caldwell Cook (who had not yet published his entertaining and instructive book, *The Play-Way*), strongly and rightly pressed the importance of acting. So did some of the witnesses summoned by the Departmental Committee on the Teaching of English (1919-21). The late Mr. John Bailey, who was a very valuable member of that Committee, stressed the essential difference between good reading and acting, and opined that Julius Caesar, succumbing to wounds with a text-book in his hands, would present a ludicrous appearance in the classroom. He was outvoted on the Committee, whose decision was wittily summed-up by the Chairman, Sir H. Newbolt, in the dictum, *Solvitur ambulando*.

## VIII

### THE TEACHING OF THE ENGLISH TEXT-BOOK<sup>1</sup>

SPEAKING at the City of London School recently, Mr. Asquith paid a fine tribute to his old headmaster, Dr. Abbott, 'one of the first headmasters to show how Shakespeare might be illuminated by the application of the same scientific methods which had long been applied to the classics of Greece and Rome.' In the present state of scholastic opinion on the teaching of English literature, this tribute and the cheers of the Prime Minister's audience, many of whom could confirm from their memory the justice of his verdict, convey to us a useful reminder that the 'intensive' method of teaching, which treats great writing, whether it be in Greek, Latin, or English, as worthy of slow, patient, concentrated study, is not necessarily dull and futile and barren of delight. Meanwhile, some evidence seems already to have come in—as, for example, in that admirable report of the Scottish Education Board summarized in *The School World* for November 1908—that the 'extensive' method which has in so many schools been substituted is not an unqualified success. A class may skim the surface of many 'texts' without once dipping into the joys of literature, and as for the essays which they write when an examiner tries to find out what they have learnt—

<sup>1</sup> *The School World*, March 1909.

well, the best description of them is the negative one contained in the late W. T. Arnold's rebuke to a younger journalist. 'I'm afraid it is rather pigwash,' admitted the novice<sup>1</sup> ruefully, when Arnold criticized his attempt at a leading article. 'My dear fellow, it is nothing half so definite,' was the immediate and incisive reply.

I hold no brief for the 'intensive' method, which, in hands less skilful—or from lips less 'golden'—than Dr. Abbott's, is said to have inspired in many a life-long distaste for Shakespeare. More than any method is the personality of the teacher, his own love for his subject, and his power of making his enthusiasm manifest to his pupils. But at least two things need to be said for the 'intensive' method. First, in the hands of a real master of literature it had a special kind of effectiveness that no other method can claim, affording an example of true scientific study, an object-lesson in the careful handling of such problems as every serious investigation into any subject involves.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, in the hands of any competent teacher—of any teacher, that is, who aimed at something better than drilling his class in a parrot-like repetition of

<sup>1</sup> The novice was C. E. Montague. See his delightful chapter in Mrs. Humphry Ward's memoir of her brother, W. T. Arnold.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. F. D. How, in *Six Great Schoolmasters*, tells us that Dr. Bradley at Marlborough did not get through more than forty or fifty lines of Virgil in a lesson, and that once at least he only got through seven lines. But he quotes Sir Courtenay Ilbert as saying of these lessons, 'You found that as Huxley's crayfish was made an introduction to all zoology, so the particular book or passage before you was serving as a guide to all Greek or Roman life, literature and art.' I see no reason why, in the right hands, a lesson of Milton or Shakespeare should not be treated with the same minuteness, and this without killing the literary interest, but with precisely the contrary effect.



notes—it provided, at all events, definite and real intellectual discipline.

So convinced am I of the importance of this intellectual discipline if literature is to have any great educational value, that I should strongly advocate the retention of the intensive method of teaching in a certain proportion of the English hours in all schools that rely altogether or mainly on English for a training in literature. In schools where Latin and Greek are studied intensively, or where foreign classics are taught as literature and not merely linguistically, the problem is different. There, I take it, the main object of the lesson in English literature is to implant or foster the love of that literature, to make the pupil aware of the treasures it contains, and to guide his or her taste in the right direction. In all schools this object will be of prime importance. In schools that are giving intellectual discipline in other ways, we may acknowledge the importance of inspiring the love of literature to be so supreme that we might be content to leave out of sight the question of intellectual discipline altogether, were it not for one consideration that will appear later.

Now for the purpose of inspiring the love of literature in a reasonable proportion of boys and girls some form of the extensive method seems essential. We do not learn to read with enjoyment until we learn to read at a pace quick enough to admit of our seeing as a whole the plot of a story or play or epic, the argument of an essay, the march of a history. Furthermore, the school life of the average pupil is short, and the range of literature is wide. Among our grown-up friends who have a real love for some one part of

literature, what a variety of likings we find—and what a variety of antipathies! If we take our authors at school so slowly that the pupil who leaves school at sixteen or seventeen has done nothing more than read two or three plays of Shakespeare and been introduced to two or three works by other writers, we have obviously not the same chances of striking upon something that will appeal to his fancy as we have when we cast our nets more widely; while the chance of lighting upon something that is antipathetic to this or that pupil is proportionately more serious when we dwell upon each book for a longer time.

Hence the demand that we should widen the range of English reading in schools seems legitimate and reasonable, even convincing. All the more important is it to ask—Does the extensive method necessarily mean, as inspectors appear to be finding in some cases, cursory and superficial reading of books half-understood, with an absence of any permanent result, and an absence of any training in the mental concentration required for the comprehension of anything in literature that is at all subtle or profound? Even if the aim of the English lesson is to be mainly the exciting of interest, do not let us forget that it is only the strenuous lesson, as a rule, that keeps up its interest for any length of time. Just as the normal form really prefers a teacher who enforces good discipline to a teacher who fails to do this, so it prefers a lesson that requires work to a lesson that does not. The lesson in English literature, then, must not be a lecture or a reading by which the master seeks to titillate the ears of his class. It may be this, with good effect, for an occasional hour, or for a small portion of the regular hour. But in the



main we shall make this lesson one into which the class are to put all the brain-power they possess, with an occasional opportunity—in answer to some question involving the exercise of taste and judgment—of discovering in themselves, and using with conscious pride and delight, a higher quality of brain than either we or they themselves have had reason to suppose that they were endowed with.

At this point we may conveniently consider the scheme for the historical treatment of English literature in schools pressed upon us by some authorities. 'Literature is dull to the average child,' they say, 'because he is taken through literary specimens at school much as he might be taken through a geological or botanical museum by an unintelligent cicerone. He sees rows of specimens in cases, but they have no meaning to him. Just as a geologist or botanist could soon awaken a child's interest by bringing the specimens into order and relation with each other, so the good teacher of literature can arouse interest by setting specimens in relation to their age and each other, and connecting the growth of literature with the growth of a nation.' That a teacher of genius can make this plan, or any plan, successful, need not be denied; but one may well doubt whether there is any sovereign virtue in the plan itself. The analogy followed is more specious than real. The most vital things in literature are the things that do not depend for their interest on our knowledge of their authorship or even of the age that produced them. The appeal of the story of Joseph, or the story of Odysseus, or of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, is universal and unconditioned. As we grow in knowledge we gain new points of view from



which to regard these stories, new lights upon their meaning, but the supreme value of them lies in the fact that they can produce their most profound impression on the immature and uninstructed mind. By all means let us use biography and history and our grown-up knowledge of literary evolution to illuminate the authors we teach in school. By all means let us awaken the historic sense by the reading of parallel or contrasted passages from authors of other countries or ages. But do not let us feed our pupils on specimens chosen to illustrate 'the development of style' or 'the course of literature.' To make that our chief aim is, as Mr. J. C. Smith has wittily said in the admirable preface to his admirable *Book of Verse for Boys and Girls*, 'literally preposterous.' For 'it means that the purpose of poetry is to illustrate its own history,' whereas 'unless poetry has some value of its own, its history can have none.' Literary history belongs, in the main, to a later stage, when our reading both of history and of literature has broadened and deepened. The label 'mediaeval' or 'eighteenth century' attached to a poem neither is nor perhaps can be significant of much to a child, though to a well-educated boy or girl of eighteen it should convey a clear meaning.

There would be more to be said in favour of historical courses of literature if early writers were always or generally simpler and easier to understand than later writers. As a matter of fact, though for ballad-poetry and for some stories in prose we go to old writers, or to translations and adaptations of old writers, in many cases that which is nearer to our own time is easier of comprehension than that which is

more remote. The better plan, then, I take it, is to choose our authors for school-reading, not primarily by their age, but by their comparative difficulty and the suitability of their subject-matter to the intellectual needs and attainments of the class. So many lists have lately been drawn up on this plan that there is no need to add to them here. I will only say that there is still perhaps a tendency to take certain standard books—*e.g.* Bacon's *Essays*—too early in the school course. I doubt whether Bacon can be read with profit below a sixth form. On the other hand, even in the lowest forms there is no reason for declining upon anything that is not first-rate literature. The choice is abundant if we take trouble with our selection.

With a scheme of reading on the extensive method duly mapped out, can we lay down any principles by which a teacher may ensure some fruit of his pains? I think so, though nothing will secure him against the examiner (he is alleged to exist, and traditional forms of question certainly bear a charmed life) who expects of the class that has read 'extensively' a knowledge of minutiae such as can only be got by 'intensive' reading.

(1) Put the question to yourself with each new book, 'How can I make this book a living thing to the class? What can I say that will awaken their interest at starting, and set them in the right attitude of mind towards it?' In that spirit give your introduction. A very brief one will often suffice. Take care above all things not to make the class weary of the book before they have begun it.

(2) Map out your time carefully beforehand. A play of Shakespeare may be taken profitably in four



lessons or in forty : but if you are to take it in four you must know precisely what you are to aim at : and the shorter course, if it is to be a real success, probably requires more skill and more study, in proportion, on the teacher's part than the longer.

(3) In your own preparation mark carefully the great scenes, the great passages, the great lines to which you will desire to direct special attention.

(4) Even in the most cursory reading take pains to fix these special passages on the memory of the class—by intensive study of the form, practice in reproduction, and the learning by heart of noble passages in prose as well as in poetry.

(5) In the case of a prose author ask frequently for a written summary of the argument of the pages read : let the class furnish this sometimes from memory, sometimes with the help of the book : the two exercises are different, and both are valuable.

(6) Ask for the meaning of difficult passages that are essential to the argument : be content, as a rule, to pass lightly over obscurities that do not affect the general sense.

(7) When time is allowed for preparation out of school, test the reading by a few questions to be answered on paper at the beginning of the lesson ; *e.g.* 'What epithets are applied to the following substantives ?' 'To what substantives are these epithets applied ?' 'By whom and to whom were the following lines spoken ?' 'Mention any metaphors and similes that occur in these pages.' 'Give the meaning of the following sentences in your own words.' Test-questions of this kind will ensure that the preparation is a reality, and can be disposed of in ten minutes.



(8) Let some part of almost every lesson be given up to reading aloud, with due insistence on *intelligent* reading.

(9) Let the English reading be used as material—and occasionally as a model—for the weekly or fortnightly theme.

(10) Whenever it is possible, correlate the English literature with the English history that is being read.

I fear—let me rather say, I hope—that these principles will seem truisms. However that may be, I feel sure that it is on careful attention to these and the like commonplace details that success in teaching largely depends.

## IX

### THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT<sup>1</sup>

'THERE are grounds for suspicion,' said a *Times* reviewer the other day, 'that the history of literature is being overdone.' Not a few of us, I fancy, would be ready to subscribe to this critic's opinion. Of books about books there seems to be no end. Histories of English literature—from the projected Cambridge History in fourteen volumes, the work of many eminent hands, downwards through all shapes and sizes to the humble (or sometimes pretentious) shilling primer—pour from the Press. There are rival series of 'Epochs' and 'Ages.' Even our favourite classics can hardly be issued without 'forewords' or 'appreciations' to tell us what to admire and what to forgive in them; and it is perhaps significant that 'The World's Classics,' which started out on its voyage bravely without any such encumbrance, put back into port again and began its travels anew, duly ballasted with the inevitable introduction. Is it really necessary, we may ask, that the prevailing fashion should dominate our school studies? Can we not introduce our pupils to English literature, so far as may be, and leave histories of literature and books about literature severely alone?

The question seems to me worth raising. I do not

<sup>1</sup> *The School World*, June 1907.

go so far as to say that the history of literature is not a proper subject for study in schools ; but I venture to say that we are not likely to teach it wisely until we have considered the possible objections to it, and that we should not allow the fact that it is prescribed for some public examinations to absolve us from the duty of considering its value or worthlessness on general principles.

As it is too often practised, the study of the history of literature means, in great part, the committing to memory of mere lists—names of authors and of books that to nine-tenths of our pupils are never likely to be anything more than names. The more conscientious pupil reproduces the harmless but trivial details of the biographical history with startling fidelity ; the less conscientious gives them confusedly and inaccurately ; but they mean no more to the one pupil than the other. I confess to the twinge of remorse that visited me for having written in the introduction to an extract from De Quincey that this eminent author passed some years at 42 Lothian Street, Edinburgh, when this highly unimportant fact was served up to me in an examination paper—bread cast upon the waters and found, not to my satisfaction, after many days. The learning of literary judgments is even worse than the learning of names. In too many of the histories used in schools the judgments are themselves second-hand judgments, superficial generalizations and traditional verdicts, jejune, uninspired, and uninspiring. But even when the history is itself a good one, when it is the work of a first-rate critic like Professor Saintsbury or Stopford Brooke, the epithets, learnt and reproduced with a fatal facility, convey no clear impression to the



learner's mind. When they do have an effect, as occasionally happens with clever pupils, the gain is very doubtful. Judgments of approbation, perhaps, do little harm. Much less pleasing is the thought of the youthful censors airily repeating the text-book's strictures on authors of whom they have not read a line—'nurslings of improved pedagogy,' Coleridge would have called them, 'taught to suspect all but their own and their lecturer's wisdom.' Such a course of training is not likely to produce genuine students and lovers of literature. We may expect instead—what perhaps we have even now got—a generation who are ready with glib superficial verdicts on books, who skim reviews and 'forewords' and 'appreciations,' but have never learnt to grapple with a serious piece of reading.

It is just to remember what may be urged on the other side, and what we may suppose to have been in the minds of those who framed examinations upon literary history. One great object of a literary training at school should be to put our pupils in the right way of using a library for the rest of their lives. They ought, therefore, to be familiar with all the great names in our national literature—not merely the names of the great authors, but the names of the great books. Each of these names ought to suggest to them treasures which they may possess and enjoy in after-years, when they are old enough to appreciate them or have time to go carefully over the ground of which now they can only take a bird's-eye view. The proverb *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum* may remind us of a second reason. There are certain literary judgments which have been given by the world's voice

beyond recall. It is good that we should know these early. They put us in possession of a standard, and they are invaluable in guiding us to the best books and in teaching us to be indifferent to the advertisements of the hour. Thirdly, it may even be said that it is vain to try to teach literature without teaching literary history. We ought not to look at a writer and his book in isolation; we ought to put them in their right relation to other books and other writers. We cannot understand a book unless we understand the writer's environment, and know something of the ideas that were in the air when the book was written, the general movement of the times, the particular history of the author, the books, and the experiences that went to his making.

Of all these arguments I gladly acknowledge the weight. The problem seems to be: how to secure the advantages claimed in such arguments for the study of literary history without running the risk of the very serious difficulties and drawbacks which I enumerated at the outset. I have thought it best to devote a large part of my space to setting forth the conditions of the problem. I believe that any teacher who fully realizes those conditions, who has made up his mind clearly about what is to be aimed at and what is to be avoided, will not be likely to go far wrong in his practice. But I will end my contribution to this unsettled question by stating briefly the conclusions at which, for myself, I have arrived.

(1) *Lower Forms*.—The history of literature is not a good subject for the lower forms of secondary schools. The limited number of hours at the teacher's disposal for English literature should be given to the



study of particular books rather than of particular periods. Literary history will at this stage only come in incidentally in the oral teaching of the book; the teacher will certainly give a biographical sketch of the author, will try to awaken interest in him as a man, and make his surroundings as real and vivid to the class as possible.

(2) *Middle Forms*.—With middle and higher forms oral teaching of literary history may gradually be introduced, not as a thing by itself, but preferably as an adjunct to the text-book of literature which is being studied, or possibly as an adjunct to a period of general history. But one may lay down the rule that at this stage the teacher should rather aim at using literature to illustrate history than at using history to illustrate literature.

(3) *Local History*.—The principle of beginning near home, which has been so much applied of late to history and geography, should not be forgotten in connexion with the history of literature. I asked in vain some time ago of a group of school children standing in the main street of Nether Stowey if they could tell me where Coleridge once lived. His name was wholly strange to them, though a tablet marked the house a few paces away. Such ignorance is less common now than it was twenty years ago, and one hopes that it will soon be impossible. That De Quincey lived at 42 Lothian Street should be of some significance in Edinburgh, though of none in Bristol.

(4) *Highest Forms*.—In the highest forms the study of a period may with advantage be substituted sometimes for the study of a single author. But a period is best studied, not in the pages of a literary history, but



as far as possible at first hand in the writings of the period. Books of extracts are useful for this purpose, but a book should be chosen in which the extracts are of reasonable length, not mere 'snippets' too short to give a real idea of an author's style and too fragmentary to awaken the reader's interest. Hales's *Longer English Poems* may well be used in this way, and I may add that the little biographies included in the notes to that book serve as an excellent model, in what they give and in what they omit, for the teacher's practice. Invaluable, too, is the anthology of longer poems edited by Professors Dixon and Grierson under the title of *The English Parnassus* (Oxford, 1909). Another useful selection is Professor J. Q. Adams's *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas* (Harrap, 1925). Its division into four chronological periods, which we may call the ages of Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, and Wordsworth respectively, adapts the First Series of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* excellently to this same purpose of historical study. The objection to 'snippets' does not apply to lyrical poems which, however short, are complete wholes.

(5) *The Text-book*.—A small text-book, such as Stopford Brooke's *Primer*, may be placed in the hands of an advanced class, but its chief use will be for purposes of reference. The teacher will still rely mainly on oral instruction, trying by the help of extracts and by what he remembers out of his own reading to make the life of the period which he is handling a reality to the class. Jusserand's *Literary History of the English People* should be invaluable to him, not merely for what it actually contains, but in suggesting to him a way of looking at literature that can hardly fail to

win the interest and sympathy of the more responsive among his pupils. Unfortunately that history stops, at present, with the Elizabethan age, but we need not let the influence of its example stop there; and for nearer times the material is fuller and more accessible.

(6) *Helps for Teacher and Pupil*.—As aids to the study of literary history, the 'English Men of Letters' Series, Ward's *English Poets*, Craik's *English Prose Selections*, and Chambers' *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* should be in the school library, and one of the large illustrated histories of literature. Mr. Stephen Gwynn's *Masters of Literature* would be read with enjoyment and profit at a comparatively early stage by a boy or girl of literary tastes; Mr. Bernard Groom's *Literary History of England* a little later. Professor Hales's 'Handbooks' and Professor Saintsbury's histories, as well as the 'Periods of European Literature' under his general editorship, and Professor Elton's wonderful *Survey of English Literature*, are rather for the teacher than the pupil. Even the teacher, I am inclined to believe, will gain more of direct help and inspiration by steeping himself in the great literary biographies—Boswell, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Lockhart, Trevelyan, Thackeray's *Lectures on the English Humourists*—than he is likely to get from the most conscientious perusal of the most conscientious products of modern literary research.

## X

### THE RELATIONS OF HISTORY AND LITERATURE <sup>1</sup>

IT is, I suppose, matter of common knowledge that in the Elizabethan age the alliance between Music and Poetry was closer than it has ever been since. What the consequences were for English poetry we can gather if we think for a moment of the beauty and splendour of the lyrics scattered through Shakespeare's plays, of the rich vowel-music of innumerable lines in the sonnets and in the dramas alike—lines such as :

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date,

or

And now my tongue's use is to me no more  
Than an unstrung viol or a harp,—

of the exquisite melody of the lyrics by Thomas Campion and others hidden away in Elizabethan song-books and forgotten, till they were unearthed again by our own generation. Puritanism in the seventeenth century destroyed that gracious co-operation of musician and poet. Not in the greatest of all Puritan poets. To John Milton "Voice and Verse" were still 'Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy, sphere-born harmonious sisters.' But Milton, the 'God-

<sup>1</sup> The opening paper at a Conference of Teachers of History, Stratford-upon-Avon, August 1915.



gifted organ-voice of England,' was the last. Before the close of the seventeenth century Sir William Temple lamented the decay of Music into Fiddling and Poetry into Rhyming. Unnatural as was the divorce between the arts, the writ was never repealed. Dryden and Pope could compose Odes for St. Cecilia's Day, but they were mere 'speeches of Mercury' with the mechanical tricks of the schools of rhetoric, 'harsh after the songs of Apollo.' Not that they seemed so to the eighteenth century. Thomas Warton, Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford, whom I name with all respect as a distinguished member of my own college, held that Milton had 'a bad ear.' This is not a luminous statement as regards Milton, but it is luminous as regards Warton and the eighteenth century. Coleridge said Schiller moved in his verse like a fly in a glue-pot: we may say the same of most eighteenth-century poets. Fortunately we have recovered an ear for the music of Elizabethan and Miltonic verse. Yet to that old love-match of Music and Poetry we still look back as to a 'first fine careless rapture' which no later generation has fully recaptured—in spite of melodious lyrics of Shelley and Tennyson, and wholehearted tributes to music like Browning's *Abt Vogler*.

I want to suggest this morning that there has been a similar unnatural divorce between History and Literature, and with similar disastrous results. To the imagination of the ancients History was the goddess Clio, one of the Muses. To our imagination she is, I suppose, Professor Dryasdust, and he belongs—or did till a year ago—to the University of Weissnichtwo. Herodotus, the father of history, named each of his

nine books after one of the Muses, and thought of his subject as the epic of the great controversy between Europe and Asia. Thucydides, the most scientific in temper of the ancient historians, perhaps the keenest in his search after truth of all historians that ever lived, yet conceived of his theme, the greatness and fall of Athens, in so dramatic a spirit that a modern critic has sought to discredit him as unduly influenced by the mythologizing propensities of the Athenian drama. Even so late as the eighteenth century of the Christian era, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in some respects the greatest historical work ever written, bears a close resemblance to a great epic in the marshalling of its multitudinous details in strict subordination to the central theme, in the constant sense of a 'high argument,' in the steady march of events to the inevitable catastrophe. In contrast with all this we are asked to-day to believe that 'history has become independent of the historian.' According to this view, the man of letters is not wanted in the historical laboratory. Clio can only obtain a situation as a typewriter. There is a clicking machine, and the results of historical investigation are reeled off on a tape, like current prices of the Stock Exchange. Even the schoolboy and schoolgirl are not to think of history as literature. If they will not have it in the form of an analysis, a date-chart or a timeline, let them be conciliated by an introduction to history served up to them in their own slang.

I know I shall be told that all this is the natural process of evolution—part of the inevitable differentiation that accompanies the growth and progress of studies. Time was, no doubt, when the folk-dance



contained the germs of history, of lyric, epic and dramatic poetry as well as music and dancing. Do I wish Time to run back and fetch the age of gold when all these were as yet undistinguished? Not so. I am not pleading that we should confuse the bounds of the separate arts. What I do say is that no artist and no student in the world can pursue his own study in an air-tight compartment, in self-satisfied ignorance of and isolation from other studies, without serious danger to his own craft. If this is true of all studies, it is especially true of History and Literature, twin sisters as I regard them, that 'never can be sundered without tears.'

The reason, I take it, is that History and Literature are both 'a criticism of life.' No amount of scientific research will produce history for us. History can never be independent of the historian. There must always be not only the thinking mind to select and weigh the facts (they will not select and weigh themselves), but also the imaginative mind to construct the hypotheses that are to be proved or disproved, and above all the philosophic mind gifted with insight into character, into the motives that govern individuals or move the masses of men. Let me illustrate one or two of the consequences that flow from the unnatural divorce between history and literature. First of all, let us notice the effect upon the historian. In losing hold of literature he is very apt to lose at the same time his hold upon life. It is true a man may acquire knowledge of human nature, without the help of books, from his own observation of life, especially if he has the advantage of a wide practical experience of affairs. But the historian in a large number of



cases is almost necessarily a student who has no such advantage, and if he cuts himself off from the great writers who 'see life steadily and see it whole,' and are therefore the best interpreters of life, he is almost certain to distort his interpretation of history by a limited and sectional point of view. It is a curiously significant fact that at the present time the histories of Greece and Rome are being written afresh from the economic standpoint by historical students, who think that they have discovered the key to the wars of antiquity in the operations of economic pressure. I do not disparage the importance of the new point of view. I think it has shed most valuable light upon ancient history. But when I am asked to believe that neither Thucydides nor Pericles himself knew much about the causes of the Peloponnesian War, and that it has been left for the twentieth century to discover them and to unravel the intrigue of the trading party in Piræus who forced Pericles' hand, then I am fain to cry out that our political economists themselves, to their own exceeding credit, have found out at last that man is not simply an economic animal, and that the new historian is merely decking himself out in their cast-off garments. Just in the same way, if you will forgive me the digression, at the very time when our English political philosophers have finally abandoned Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the 'blessedness of final anarchy,' as it has been brilliantly nicknamed, our youthful educational reformers have picked it up and are carrying it about to educational conferences as the Great Birth of Time.

And what is the effect upon the literary man of the divorce between history and literature? Remember

that the literary man has frequently to ask history to provide him with material. Is he not very likely to say ?—' History as such is purely the concern of the specialist. I am not concerned with the search after truth. Shakespeare wrote great historical plays, but I am told that his history was all wrong. Very well, why should I not follow his example ? My business is simply to paint an attractive portrait or make an interesting story. If the facts do not square with my conception of the character, or if they do not harmonize with my story, why should I not alter them ? ' The argument is so plausible that it stands some chance at least of convincing readers as well as writers, of making us regard the critics who point out inconsistencies or inaccuracies in an historical novel or drama, as merely tiresome pedants. Yet I think a little reflection will convince us that the argument is unsound. Historical truth is not purely the concern of the specialist. It is, if you like, an ideal that is never reached, but to which humanity is ever aspiring ; or it is a priceless possession slowly and painfully acquired by the infinite toil of students in successive generations. No intellectual man or woman has the right to be indifferent to it. We do not ask that the literary man who proposes to write an historical novel or poem shall engage in historical research. No one complains that Tennyson in writing his glorious ballad of *The Revenge* went to no source more recondite than Froude's *Short Studies on Great Subjects*. All we ask is that the literary man shall take ordinary pains to put himself abreast of the knowledge and thought of his own time, and that he shall not, for his own convenience, bring forward a view of an historical character that is opposed to



reasonable probabilities, or alter historical facts in a way that tends to darken or pervert his readers' understanding of history. So much as this we have a right to ask. When the example of Shakespeare, or even the example of Sir Walter Scott in *Kenilworth*, is quoted to justify inaccuracy, we answer that the standard in such matters advances, and legitimately advances, from age to age. It was higher at the end of the eighteenth than at the beginning of the seventeenth century: it is higher now than at the end of the eighteenth century. This advance we owe to the historians; and we have no right to undo their work. The question no more affects our estimation of Shakespeare's genius than it affects our estimation of the genius of the great Italian artists of the sixteenth century. They painted the personages of the New Testament in Italian costumes of their own century, in Italian loggias with backgrounds of Umbrian or Etruscan hills, and we are glad that they did so. But no educated painter of the twentieth century is at liberty to flout the accumulated knowledge of his time, though we do not demand of him that he should always observe the standard set by Holman Hunt, when, in order to paint his picture of 'The Scapegoat,' he pitched his tent on the shores of the Dead Sea.

You will not, I hope, suspect me of meaning anything so foolish as that the literary man is more in danger now than he was in Shakespeare's time of mistakes about historical fact. He is, of course, in far less danger. What I mean rather is that the advance of knowledge has created for him a responsibility that did not exist in Shakespeare's time—a responsibility that he cannot escape—and that any failure to realize



this responsibility is injurious to his art. He is under no obligation to know anything about history so long as he avoids historical subjects, but the moment he touches historical subjects this responsibility begins.

And, again, when Shakespeare is quoted to justify indifference to historical fact, it is important to answer that there has been some exaggeration about this. Judged by the standards of his own day, Shakespeare was not indifferent. 'Our Shakespeare,' wrote Nahum Tate when he was adapting *Richard II* for the Restoration stage, 'in this Tragedy bated none of his characters an Ace of the Chronicle; he took care to show them no worse than they were, but represents them never a jot better.' And of the Roman plays one of the latest and best commentators, Professor Gordon, writes: 'There is no doubt that for all readers of Shakespeare, and especially for those younger readers who need interpreters, the best commentary on plays like *Julius Caesar* is always the *Lives* of Plutarch on which they are founded.'

Thirdly, I come to the humbler level which is the more immediate concern of most of us, and I ask: What is the effect of the unnatural divorce between history and literature upon the teacher? I think I can answer best by quoting a question that was asked in the Stratford Conference of Teachers of English. 'When I am teaching one of Shakespeare's historical plays,' a lady asked, 'ought I to point out that the history is wrong, or ought I not rather to keep history and literature entirely apart?' Now if the questioner merely meant—'Is it necessary to tabulate all Shakespeare's departures from strict historical accuracy in detail?—to point out in *Julius*

*Caesar*, for instance, that Antony could not have seen Caesar put on his new cloak 'the day he overcame the Nervii,' because he was not with Caesar in Gaul till three years later, or in *Richard II* that the Duchess of York was not Aumerle's mother and was not old, or in *Henry V* that Shakespeare has combined two embassies to the French king into one '—if this, I say, is all that was meant by the question, we shall have no hesitation in answering—'Leave such points alone, because they are of no great importance either to history or to literature. Your chief aim is that your pupils shall understand and enjoy as much as is possible of the play. Test everything that you are inclined to tell them about language, or metre, or structure, or source, or history, or character by that standard, and you will not be likely to go far wrong.' But there seemed to be in the question, and in the language used by some speakers in the discussion, something more than this—an implication that the Richard II whom you get in the history-books was a real Richard II, whereas the Richard II of Shakespeare was an imaginary person, the invention of Shakespeare. I cannot help thinking that, consciously or unconsciously, a good many people have an idea of this kind at the back of their minds. But what is the Richard II of the history-book? There was a real Richard II once, but, if I may say so, he was only known to God—not even to himself, or his wife, or his friends. History cannot possibly recover him for us. All we can get is an imaginary portrait, a reconstruction, skilful or unskilful, from such material as has come down to us. We are not therefore to think of the Richard of the history-book as a Richard of



objective fact and the Richard of Shakespeare as a piece of subjective imagination. Poet and historian are both, in the last resort, literary men engaged in the same task of reconstructing a personality for us and presenting him to us in a literary form. The difference between them is that whereas the poet's primary aim is to make all the details true to his conception and so to produce a consistently imagined portrait, the historian's aim is, or ought to be, rather to make his conception true to the details which are given him by historical tradition, or discovered by his own research. In this way, though we can never get back again the vanished personality, and though we shall never have anything more than the subjective impression of this or that historian, or the subjective impression that is left in the reader's mind by the data presented by the historian, we may hope that the labours of successive generations of historians and poets gradually bring us nearer in comprehension to the great personalities of the past, as we become further removed from them in time. We shall certainly have a better chance of approaching that ever-receding goal if poet and historian recognize that they are allies bound upon a common quest, than if they suppose that, as their crafts are separate, they have little to do with each other.

Coming back once more to the humbler level of education, I would urge that teachers of history and literature have everything to gain by recognizing the immense importance of each subject to the other. What sort of use should the teacher of history make of literature? If he realizes at all the amount of truth contained in Dr. Johnson's saying that 'the chief



glory of every people arises from its authors,' he will not need to be told that to study any period without studying the authors of that period, or to teach any period without teaching something about the authors of that period, if it has any, is an absurdity. If his period is the eighteenth century, for example, how can he get his pupils to know it so well as by introducing them to Steele and Addison, Pope and Swift, Johnson and Gibbon, and Goldsmith and Gray? But let us narrow the question for convenience to the point that is naturally of most interest to us here. What use is the teacher of history to make of Shakespeare? First of all, it would be difficult to exaggerate the direct value for beginners in history of the great sequence of English historical plays. 'Marlborough confessed he had learned most of his English history from Shakespeare; and Coleridge believed that a large part of the information on our old names and achievements, even in his own time, came directly or indirectly from the same source' (Prof. G. S. Gordon). If Coleridge's observation could no longer be made, I think the change is to be regretted; and it is possibly the greatest of all our debts to the Stratford festival that it does so much towards making his statement true even in the twentieth century. If history is to appeal to boys and girls, it must be presented to them first of all in the guise of a moving pageant of great persons and heroic deeds. Where in the world, one may ask, can they find this so well as in Shakespeare's English historical plays?—

trumpets blown for wars;  
And clattering flints batter'd with clanging hoofs;  
And . . . crowds in column'd sanctuaries;

And forms that pass'd at windows and on roofs  
Of marble palaces.

Let us think next of the Roman plays. I suppose that one of the most amazing things in the whole history of literature is the way in which Shakespeare, with the little Latin and less Greek that he learnt in this room,<sup>1</sup> dependent upon an English translation of a French translation of a Greek author, comprehended and revitalized the spirit of ancient Rome. It is true that his play of *Julius Caesar* represents to us a Caesar who is already touched with decay, and that to this fact as well as to their natural ingratitude towards the author of the *Commentaries* on the Gallic War, English boys may owe a certain tendency to undue disparagement of the conqueror. In spite of this, those who are fortunate enough to be steeped in this play in childhood, gain from it such a sense, such a true sense, of the might and majesty of Rome, as they could gain nowhere else; and on the fallen Caesar himself we gaze as on 'the ruins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times.'

When we pass from the Roman plays to the Greek we have to acknowledge that Shakespeare is not equally successful. *Timon of Athens* has nothing of a Greek atmosphere about it. Alcibiades does not recall to us the Alcibiades of Thucydides, or even of Plutarch; nor is the Senate of the 'coward and lascivious town' in the least like any council or assembly of the ancient Athenian republic. Does

<sup>1</sup> The large room of the Grammar School, Stratford-on-Avon. I am aware that Shakespeare's connexion with the school has never been proved, but even a sceptical reader will pardon this appeal to the traditional *Genius loci*. See p. 49 also.

that mean that the play is of no use to the teacher of history, or that its only use is that he should point out its mistakes? Far from it. I think the play might well be read in school more often than it is. The simplicity of the characters and plot makes it easily intelligible to youth. And the teacher of history can surely make something of the fact that Shakespeare has given us, in Alcibiades, a picture of an Italian condottiere, and in the Athenian Senate, an oligarchy of rich merchants such as bore rule in mediaeval Venice or Genoa.

And, finally, let me ask what sort of use the teacher of literature is to make of history. I come back to the point on which I laid stress almost at starting—that both history and literature are to be regarded as a criticism or interpretation of life. The key to the close relations between the two studies lies there. If the teacher of literature keeps that aspect of it continually in view, he will not be liable to think, as he is sometimes apt to do at present, that history for him ought to mean mainly the story of the development of the various forms of verse and prose. I have no wish to disparage the interest or value of such studies, though I think they are more profitably and more pleasurably pursued at the university than in the school. But of far greater importance, in all the earlier stages at any rate, is it to keep the study of literature as close as possible to human life. And the best way to do that is for the teacher of literature to have a living knowledge of the period in which his author wrote, and of the men and women for whom the book was first written. To take our illustration once more, and for the last time, from Shakespeare,



in what ways does the teacher need to make use of historical knowledge? Not to throw light on difficulties of language or obscurities of allusion, after the manner of the old Clarendon Press commentaries; nor even that he may compare Shakespeare's Richards or Henrys, or Wolsey or Cromwell, with the Richards and Henrys, and Wolsey and Cromwell, of historical tradition. Far more he needs historical knowledge that he may see in his mind's eye the Elizabethan England in and for which Shakespeare wrote, the queen and the court, the young gallants, the theatre, the actors, the audience, the books that were read, the sports that they played—all that world to which Shakespeare holds up the mirror with such wonderful fidelity in his dramas. It is not for the historical plays alone that he needs this historical knowledge—perhaps not even chiefly—though in these one matter of great interest will be the conception of kingship and government and patriotism, that was natural to an Elizabethan Englishman. In *The Tempest* the scene is set on an enchanted island of no age or clime. Yet what a flood of light is let in upon the play when we think of Elizabethan sailors, and the strange yarns they must have spun to eager listeners in London taverns, or connect the imaginary commonwealth of Gonzalo with the speculations of Montaigne. The Illyria of *Twelfth Night* is not to be found on a map, or only on such a map as Leigh Hunt invented in his charming fantasy of *The World of Books*. But how much better we understand both *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* when we see in them the reflection of the same Elizabethan world that fascinates us with its music and rich colour and complexity, its chivalry and

romance and mediaevalism, its scepticism and modernity, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*—'the spacious days of great Elizabeth' that had room for so many contrasts and in the midst of the most fantastic dreamings were never far from the realities of life. That, in fact, is the moral I would fain draw from them this morning for historian and man of letters and teacher alike—that none should be content to dwell in isolation, 'housed in a dream at distance from the kind,' that each should bring his study into the daylight of the common world, learn what he can from it, give to it all he can.

## XI

### THE NOVEL IN SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>

IT may be kind to warn the potential reader at the outset that this paper does not discuss the alluring topic of the school novel—the novel, that is, which proposes to offer a picture, whether realistic or romantic, of school-life. Nor yet is it concerned with the disciplinary problem sometimes raised by ‘the novel in school’—when, for instance, it is being studied under the rose, or under the desk, in the hour assigned by educational authorities to the prosecution of the higher or lower mathematics.

No, I am thinking of its open and accredited introduction into the school time-table. I am aware that some schoolmasters are still of opinion that it ought not to be there at all. Sixty years ago the undisputed place of *Waverley* in the curriculum was as a holiday-task. I had imagined that the author’s sub-title, ‘ ’Tis sixty years since,’ might to-day be given a new application. But on the very day on which I write, behold in *The Times* a fevered letter from an indignant parent. *Waverley* has been prescribed as a holiday-task to her public-school son; and the idea that an English classic, even a classic of fiction, should be read in the holidays is, to this modern parent, acutely distressing. She assures us that the task is ‘a nightmare’ throughout the seven weeks of holiday, that it completely

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Education*, Sept. 1931.



spoils the seventh week, and will leave her young hopeful suffering from eye-strain and brain-exhaustion. Well, well—sixty years ago we did not always read our holiday-tasks, but I am very sure that they seldom disturbed our dreams.

Of *Waverley* as a holiday-task I will only say that, if it seems right still to impose it, the chances that it will get upon the nerves of any of its victims can be considerably lessened by a simple expedient. When examinations are virtually over, but a day or two of the term still remains to be got through, why not devote an hour to a preliminary sketch of the tale? So may you awaken curiosity without satisfying it, and help your pupils to visualize the background of the novel, the scenery, and the characters.

My impression is that quite a small proportion of the ordinary class, whether of boys or girls, is sufficiently 'bookish' to visualize at all readily the work of classical fiction that you ask them to read. I do not know what difference the cinema and the illustrated papers have made to the present generation as compared with my own. These things ought to make visualization much easier, since they familiarize the child with scenery and costumes drawn from all parts, and even from all ages, of the world. On the other hand, it is alleged that the imagination is impaired by the aids so liberally supplied to the modern child. There is no doubt that the imagination of young children is weakened by elaborate toys; and similarly it may be that the older child, fed to surfeiting with external pictures, becomes too lazy to make pictures in his own brain. So it is probable that when a form is merely given a standard novel to read quietly in

school or at home, many do not become sufficiently interested to visualize the story. The old-fashioned alternative to silent reading was reading aloud by turns. If the master was a good reader and took his turn with the rest, there was at once an improvement: the story became dramatic, and the class began to see and to hear. Otherwise this plan of reading aloud was apt to be a dismal failure. Some boys gabbled so fast, and others read so slowly and stumblingly, that the class in self-defence soon let their attention wander away to the cricket-field and other living interests.

What I am concerned to urge is that great English novels, if introduced at all into school, can and ought to be used to far worthier purpose than as a pastime or a soporific. Like the great tragedies, they can rank among the finest instruments of education, insensibly instilling valuable lessons for life and storing the mind with rich words and lovely images. Quite young boys, it is found, become interested in the reactions of character, in observing the ways in which human nature works. If novels can achieve this end, is it a serious objection that they can be made to provide delightful entertainment by the way? Only if we subscribe to the doctrine of Mr. Dooley, that 'it doesn't matter much what we learn children, provided that it is something unpleasant.' With sympathy and inventiveness on the teacher's part, the classroom that is occupied with a masterpiece of fiction may even be turned into 'a Paradise of Dainty Devices.'

It is not necessary, observe, that the teacher should spend much of the time in talking himself. But he must know the novel well, and be prepared with a



variety of questions and exercises, and above all he must avoid a stereotyped and monotonous procedure.

The main thing is to get the class interested *creatively* in the tale. Let them dramatize the most stirring scenes. Sections of the class may be set to work upon different scenes. When this has been done, it may be possible to go on to act some of them. Another good exercise is the composing of letters from one character to another; or the composition of a dialogue which the novelist implies but leaves unwritten.

One plan that has been tried with great success after the reading of a novel of adventure like *Treasure Island* is to substitute for the ordinary essay-writing of the term the construction of an original romance. The main outlines of the plot can be settled in a preliminary talk to which all members of the class are encouraged to contribute. After that, two different methods of procedure are open. All can write competing versions of the same chapter, in the same week, or the whole novel may be quickly completed by different members of the form undertaking different chapters. Those who are interested in this idea of story-writing by a class may be recommended to read either Mr. R. T. Lewis's *Composition through Story-Writing: A Book for Adventurers* (Harrap, 1927), or *The Saga of Form IV*, edited by Ronald Fuller (Church Stretton, The Stretton Press, 1929). I have no experience at first hand of this plan, but I think either of these books is enough to convince anyone of its practicability. The proper place for it, I imagine, is the junior school or the lower forms of a secondary school—the stage at which imaginative writing as an



exercise is most valuable. To get the full benefit of the plan, teacher and pupil alike should come to it with enthusiasm as to something fresh and exceptional, not in the routine of every term.

'Correlation,' which was the favourite word of educational reformers thirty years ago, is now out of favour, because teachers of different subjects found themselves teaching something in which they were not specially interested in order to conform with somebody else's plans. But the novel presents a clear case for friendly co-operation between the teachers of history and literature. If the history of the nineteenth century is being read, a splendid opportunity is missed if none of the great Victorian novels is read, in school or out of school, at the same time.

Are abridgments of great novels to be tolerated or encouraged for school use? For the kind of abridgment which consists of a retelling or paraphrase in different words of a famous novel no condemnation can be too severe. The late Mr. S. R. Crockett's versions of some of Scott's novels may be cited as an awful warning. Nor, again, can anything be said in palliation of the offence of those who sell an incomplete book without any indication of its incompleteness. I am told that this is a common feature of the cheap and gaudily bound editions procurable at drapery-stores. If this is true, the reprehensible practice of 'abridging' the nominal number of yards in a reel of cotton, exposed and denounced by Herbert Spencer in a well-known work many years ago, but still apparently persisting, may have infected the books sold in such close neighbourhood. But a good deal of nonsense is sometimes talked about the wickedness of

giving abridgments to children, as if every famous novel were a perfect work of art that could not be touched without sacrilege. To remember the conditions under which Dickens produced his *Pickwick Papers* in monthly instalments, or Hardy wrote his *Mayor of Casterbridge* week by week for publication in *The Graphic*, is to realize the absurdity of this. There are few long novels that could not be improved artistically by some compression, though the task of the abridger is one that calls for right judgment, delicate taste, and infinite pains. If we reduce, as has been done before now, *The Old Curiosity Shop* into *The Story of Little Nell*, keeping all the excessive 'sob-stuff' which Dickens wove into that part of his tale, the last state is worse than the first: the 'sob-stuff' has become more prominent than ever, because it is a larger proportion of the book. The mature reader very properly prefers to do his own abridging, by skipping a sentence here and a paragraph there, instead of permitting anyone else to do it for him. But thousands of English children will never come in sight at all of Scott and Thackeray, or even of Dickens, unless we are content to allow abridgments. It should be realized that all who are brought into a bowing acquaintance with the great writers by means of a competent abridgment have their lives enriched by some figures from a wonderful portrait-gallery. Don Quixote, it may be, and Sancho Panza, Meg Merrilies and Dominie Sampson, David Copperfield and Mr. Micawber, Mr. Bennet and Mr. Collins, Henry Esmond and Beatrix. This they gain, even if they do not follow up their good fortune. But whenever the children are worthily taught, we may be sure that



some of them, then or later, proceed to the reading of the unabridged author.

One possible use of abridgments may be mentioned here. The different pace at which children read is the most obvious practical difficulty in the class-study of the novel. A conceivable solution of this difficulty may be found in giving an abridgment to the slower children, and a complete text as an encouragement and mark of distinction to those of a nimbler wit. I am old-fashioned enough to view such modern inventions as 'the Dalton Plan' with some distrust. But I can believe that such a system is more applicable to the reading of fiction than to most studies, just because of the different paces at which different children read a story. Under the Dalton Plan this raises no difficulty, because those who read quickly can be given more to read, and more exercises to write.

Once again let me press the necessity that the teacher himself should have a thorough mastery of the book which is to be read. He must know it well enough to carry the plot in his mind and to form a clear idea as to the way in which the novel has been constructed. Three recent books will help him: *Aspects of the Novel*, by E. M. Forster; *The Craft of Fiction*, by Percy Lubbock; and *The Structure of the Novel*, by Edwin Muir (Hogarth Lectures, No. 9, the Hogarth Press). The last-named I think the most valuable for our purpose. Mr. Lubbock's book is accomplished criticism, but written too much under the influence of the art of Henry James. I append a score of questions—obviously not all of them applicable to all novels—which I venture to put forward as worth bearing in mind in the teacher's preliminary study.



## QUESTIONS ON THE NOVEL

1. What is meant by 'the background' of a novel? How important is it?

2. Discuss different openings for a novel. Should there be an introductory chapter or not?

3. Is a chronological order best? What advantage is there in plunging *in medias res*, and then going back (as Thackeray does in *Esmond*)?

4. How far is plot necessary to a novel? How much plot is there in *Pickwick*?

5. How far is character necessary to a novel? How much character-drawing is there in *Treasure Island*?

6. Discuss the excellence of the writer's dialogue. Do all his characters speak with his voice, or has each a voice of its own? Is he more successful with some than with others?

7. In writing an historical novel, is there any advantage in using an archaic diction, as Scott did? Or does the story seem more alive to you if the characters use modern idioms, as in Mrs. Naomi Mitchison's stories?

8. Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of the use of dialect.

9. What is 'local colour'? Is it more artistic to lay your scene in an actual town (e.g. Oxford or Cambridge), and to aim at photographic accuracy, or to invent an imaginary 'Oxbridge'?

10. Is the writer more successful in depicting men or women?

11. What is the most effective scene in the novel?

12. What use does the writer make of natural scenery and of architecture? Does he use 'the pathetic fallacy' in his weather?

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13. Do you feel that the writer moves his characters about, like chessmen on a board. (Hardy is accused of this.) Or do the events happen *inevitably*?

14. What do you learn about the author's own tastes and studies? What books has he read? What other sources than books has he used?

15. Is the ending the right one? How differently might the story have ended?

16. Are there any scenes which owe their power to the writer's self-restraint—*i.e.* to his refusal to say more than is necessary?

17. Are there any notable similes or metaphors? Has the book added to your own vocabulary?

18. Does the author show partiality or prejudice in dealing with religious or political parties? Or does he widen our imagination and sympathies?

19. Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of writing a novel in the form of (a) autobiography, (b) letters.

20. Choose a short descriptive passage of special excellence, and observe in detail how the writer gets his effects. (See an example of this from *Jane Eyre* on p. 60.)

## XII

### ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

#### I. ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION<sup>1</sup>

THERE could scarcely be a severer condemnation of the School Certificate Examination than the assumption, if there were any real ground for it, that the preparation for it consists in the getting-up during one year of certain specified authors and the working for the same year at a particular and definite type of composition-book. If the School Certificate is to perform the function claimed for it by its promoters—that it is to furnish a fair test of the efficiency of secondary school education to the age of sixteen, and a fair test of the standard which a pupil of good average intelligence may be expected to reach by that time—the examination will be in view from the very beginning of the secondary school curriculum. But that ought not to mean that all our work is slavery to an examination. On the contrary, it would be reasonable to affirm that, just in proportion as the examination is a good one, it will not deflect the school education from the course which it would ideally follow if no other end were in view than the mental culture of the pupil.

Is this true of the School Certificate Examination at the present day? In theory and intention, yes. The papers are set with great ability, insight, and

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Education*, May 1930.



sympathy, and the last thing that the examining bodies wish is to make all teaching slavishly conform to a single pattern. Yet it must be remembered that, even with the best intentions in the world, an examination cannot point the way to an ideal very far in front of current school practice. Examination papers must be set with strict relevance to the kind of teaching which is common in the school, and sudden changes of the type of question raise at once a storm of protest. But the tyranny of examinations is, to some extent at least, a bogey invented by the over-anxious teacher's own brain. For the best results in this examination will not be gained by any process of 'cramming' or unintelligent learning-by-heart, but by schools where the teaching is enthusiastic and full of stimulus, where the work is enjoyed, and where at the same time a good standard of order is easily maintained, because both teachers and pupils realize that all work which is worth doing involves a certain amount of drudgery and self-discipline.

The notes that follow are intended to give some hints for the English curriculum in the secondary school which is to lead up to the First and Second School Certificate Examinations.

The English examination falls into two parts: (a) English composition, (b) English literature. In the present paper we confine ourselves to (a).

Here the practice of the great examining bodies differs. All of them require an essay, but whilst most of them set also a paper of questions 'to test knowledge of the correct meaning and use of words and phrases,' and 'questions involving such knowledge of analysis, accident, and syntax as may be necessary

for the writing of correct English,' one of the most important, the Joint Matriculation Board of the five universities, relies wholly on the essay and a passage set for précis, while the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board offers the alternative of a précis and a paper of questions testing 'literary intelligence.'

Whether questions which directly test the candidate's understanding of the grammatical structure of sentences are set or not, it is quite certain that such tests are desirable, and even essential, in preparation for the examination. The outcry of a few years ago against the study of grammar in elementary schools and the lower forms of secondary schools, however reasonable as a protest against the shibboleths of grammatical labels and the wearisome and mechanical practice of parsing and elaborate tabular analyses, had some lamentable results. Sometimes one is tempted to think that the grammatical incoherency of the popular Press at the present day may be accounted for by that period of English educational history in which grammar was recklessly abandoned.

Grammar has come back, at any rate partially, but with a clearer realization that its proper place in the schools is as a means, not as an end. The teacher can scarcely do better than begin by studying for himself *Common-Sense Grammar*, by P. A. Barnett (Christophers, 10d.). The author, a retired 'H.M.I.' of great experience, asked himself what was the irreducible minimum of grammar that must be known by anybody who wished to make sure of using the English language correctly. Any teacher who puts himself deliberately at Mr. Barnett's point of view



may feel certain that he is approaching the problem of grammar-teaching in a thoroughly sound and practical way. For himself, and to gain a proper mastery of his subject, he must go a good deal further than this little book of fifty pages will take him. He should certainly make himself acquainted, for example, with *The King's English*, of H. W. and F. G. Fowler (Oxford Press), and the *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Oxford Press), of the same authors. And if he finds himself becoming really interested in questions of grammar, he should go on to the *Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* of the great Danish scholar, Dr. Otto Jespersen (Allen & Unwin, four parts). But the more learned and competent he becomes, the more he will need to bring himself back forcibly to Mr. Barnett's irreducible minimum, and start his class-teaching with that definitely in his mind.

There are plenty of recent books that present this irreducible minimum, or a very little more, in an attractive form for class consumption. There is Mr. Guy Pocock's lively *New Grammar* (Dent). There are Mr. George Sampson's *Cambridge Lessons in English*. (Be sure to get the Teacher's Edition, first published in 1929: Book I, 2s. 6d.; Book II, 3s.; Book III, 3s. 6d. Cambridge Press.) Another good book is Mr. G. A. Twentyman's *Elementary English Grammar and Composition* (Rivington, 2s.), and the same author's more elaborate *English Grammar and Composition* (in three parts, 1s. 6d., 2s., and 3s. Rivington).

The ancient practice of choosing a fresh, unrelated 'theme' for a class exercise once a week, if it still survives anywhere, should be definitely discarded.



Experience has shown that many pupils go through the whole of a secondary school course, writing a so-called essay every week or every fortnight, and writing it no better at the end of their time than at the beginning. There has been no advance, because neither teacher nor pupil has had any definite aim. There is now, however, an abundance of exercise-books which, in place of the old theme, provide a variety of stimulating exercises. In particular, the writers of the new books recognize that, in learning to write good English, good models are necessary—not the lifeless model essays constructed for the purpose by the manufacturers of the old-fashioned composition-books, but living models of English prose from the best authors.

The teacher who wants to get some fun for himself out of his English lessons, and to help his class to that lightness of spirit which is the best antidote to dullness and boredom, should read a little posthumous book by G. Y. Elton, called *Teaching English* (Macmillan, 1929, 3s.). It contains some rank heresies, possibly, but it is certainly full of life and ideas, and it includes a glorious variety of original exercises. Many ingenious and delightful exercises based on literary models are to be found in another small book, *The Writing of Prose and Verse in School*, by C. J. Brown (Macmillan, 1931). Another book which the teacher of composition should read is *Expression in Speech and Writing*, by E. A. Greening Lamborn (Oxford Press, 1922, 4s. 6d. net). This is specially useful for its hints on oral composition.

II. ENGLISH LITERATURE <sup>1</sup>

IN this article I propose to consider how the teaching of English literature may best be graded in the secondary school up to the School Certificate age.

We may assume that the reading specially appropriate to childhood—fairy-tales, folk-lore, retellings in simple prose of the great epics, nonsense books like *Alice in Wonderland* or *The Rose and the Ring*—has been done in the elementary, preparatory, or junior school. In the lowest form of the secondary school we already have higher ambitions. We want to enlarge greatly the child's vocabulary ; we want also to widen his range of interests, to stir his historical imagination, to awaken his understanding of the springs and motives of human action, to help him to realize something of the wonder and beauty of the world of nature. Books suitable for these purposes present themselves in immense variety—books not at all too difficult, and yet with openings to far vistas. We have no excuse for lingering too long among fairy-tales, nor yet for declining on dull books of mere information. Now is the time for stories of adventure like *Westward Ho!*, *Treasure Island*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Lorna Doone*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, *Moby Dick* (in an abridged form). Now, too, is the time for entrancing books of travel and exploration and books of animal-life : Bates's *A Naturalist on the Amazons*, White's *Selborne*, W. H. Hudson's bird books. Biographies are suitable, when we can find biographies of men of action on the manageable scale of Plutarch's *Lives*, and historical episodes, especially if we draw

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Education*, July 1930.

them from the great historians, Gibbon, Motley, Macaulay, Froude.

Are books of 'snippets' to be condemned? Much will depend on the length of the snippets, and the way in which we propose to use them. Short passages of prose, even so short as half a page, are eminently useful for intensive study, and can be treated as material for a lesson in composition. But for reading, the best length of a snippet is something like ten pages. Such a passage is long enough to give the class some notion of an author's style—not a conscious notion, perhaps, but the instinctive subconscious feeling which influences the learner's own manner of writing. It is long enough also to occupy profitably an hour's lesson, and to be properly rounded off and complete. A reading book composed of a number of extracts, from one author or several, may be profitably used for a term's lessons now and again in lieu of a continuous narrative.

Is it necessary or desirable that all the class should read the same book? There are certain obvious advantages in the plan of using half-a-dozen or more different books concurrently. Individual tastes can be consulted more freely; the provision of 'texts' is an easier matter; children who read quickly are not kept back to the slow pace of dullards. On the other hand, to test the reading is very difficult, and where there is no testing a proportion of the children soon cease to read at all and merely dream away the hour. The plan of silent reading, with free choice of books, is well worth trying on occasion—perhaps as often as one hour in each week—but I do not believe that it should be allowed to displace the class study of a book.



For the second year many of the shorter standard English novels provide suitable reading—*Cranford*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Dickens's *Christmas Books*. The longer novels of Scott, Dickens, and Jane Austen require some abridgment for reading in school, though they can be used without abridgment for private reading. Any abridgment should be confined to omission : paraphrased versions of great authors are not literature, and the schoolmaster should not tolerate them.

When fiction is used in school—and there is every reason why it should be, provided that only acknowledged masterpieces are used—care should be taken that something is learnt from it, not in the way of a moral lesson, but in intelligent appreciation of the construction of a work of art. All great and wholesome fiction, and indeed all literature that is worthy of the name, will convey moral lessons, just because it is an interpretation of life ; but it is generally best to allow it to convey such lessons silently. But *literary* lessons are only absorbed silently and unconsciously by a small proportion of readers. The chief drawback to the use of fiction in school is that so few schoolmasters understand how to make it a real education. They are afraid, perhaps, of spoiling the children's enjoyment if they have to do anything with the book beyond reading it. Yet it is unlikely that any reader's enjoyment of a novel was ever spoiled by learning to appreciate the way in which it was made or grew up ; or by distinguishing the characteristics of the different persons of the tale ; or by observing the divisions of books, chapters, and paragraphs ; or by noting the precise meaning of words, or understanding the geography and the local colour. The schoolmaster who

studies a great novel for himself in ways of this sort, and then seeks to initiate his class into the mysteries of the craft, is at all events saving literature in the school from becoming a 'soft option.'

Some of the easier English essays are suitable for reading in the second year, but for the most part essays are better left till the third year. Where relief from continuous reading is wanted, we may fall back upon a really good literary 'reader,' which will give plenty of selections that approximate in character to essays.

But in the third year the essay may well be used—though not the *Essays of Elia*. For all their charm, these are difficult reading, with few exceptions, for young boys and girls, and are better reserved for the School Certificate year or even later. Nor should I think of prescribing *Virginibus Puerisque* for an earlier year than the fourth. But *Travels with a Donkey* and *An Inland Voyage* are not too difficult for the third year.

Now, too, we may begin to use Macaulay's *Essays*. They are out of favour with the literary critics, it is true, but in the early stages of craftsmanship they teach many valuable lessons. Bacon should be reserved for the sixth form: he is invaluable there, but too difficult for any form below the highest. But Steele, Addison, Swift, Goldsmith, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, De Quincey—now is the time to make good use of all these, as well as of the modern descriptive essayists to be found in *Essays of To-day* (Harrap) or the *Modern Essays* of the 'Kings' Treasuries' (Dent).

The fourth year's prose reading is prescribed for us



by the School Certificate. The examination has now been established long enough to show what authors are suitable, and what are unsuitable, as 'set books.' Both in the choice of books, and in the setting of questions upon the books, I am disposed to say that there has been a steady improvement as a result of the examiners' own experience, and still more perhaps in consequence of the conferences with teachers wisely established by the examining bodies, and of the recommendations of the investigating committees of the Secondary Schools' Examination Council. To find fault with the choice of books, or with the type of questions set, is an easy way of asserting one's own intellectual superiority; but there is remarkably little ground for justifiable complaint.

Before I leave the consideration of the prose book, I should like to say a word in favour of prose repetition. Some prose should be learnt in each term, though the quantity need not be great. The learning by heart should be made as easy as possible by preliminary class-study of the piece to be learnt. This preliminary study, be it noted, calls for careful preparation on the teacher's part, if it is to be made really helpful. The passage to be learnt may be taken from the 'text' that is being read in class. In that case the teacher should take pains to select passages that have some claim to be considered models of beautiful and melodious prose, passages that have a certain unity of subject and completeness, and passages that the class can feel an interest in. The alternative is to use one of the books of prose extracts specially compiled with a view to repetition.

All the examining bodies, I think, prescribe Shake-



speare for the School Certificate ; and I hope they will long continue the practice, undeterred by the traditional gibe of the professional actor about Shakespeare being made hateful to Englishmen at school. Shakespearean actors with direct experience of school audiences, like Sir Frank Benson or Sir Ben Greet, know better. Even half a century ago it was not true of every school that the Shakespeare lesson was unpopular, and to-day there cannot be many schools where such a charge could be brought with any justice. The people who really deserve censure are those who cry out at the waste of time and money when school-children are taken to see Shakespeare performed in the theatre. It is not schoolmasters who protest that there is no ' education ' in this, but rate-payers' societies and His Majesty's judges. Shakespeare, then, we shall prescribe in each of the four years of the secondary school up to the School Certificate. The main thing is to see that a proper graduation is observed. *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *As You Like It* should come first. The great but difficult tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus* should not be attempted before the fourth year. Inferior Elizabethan plays should not be read in school at all. There is so much of absolutely first-rate drama that we have no excuse for wasting time upon the second-rate. This does not mean that there is any harm in reading or acting *Ralph Roister Doister*, or the like, for recreation in a school dramatic society.

Besides drama, there must be some poetry at every stage. For the lower forms we need plenty of ballads and narrative poetry. Longfellow should not be

despised. Young schoolmasters, fresh from English literature courses at the university in which Longfellow's name is not mentioned except perhaps to point a moral or adorn a tale, have no use for him. Possibly they have no use for Tennyson either. If so, they are sadly mistaken. You cannot educate people into liking good poetry by taking them through a course of bad, it is true ; and school anthologists who admit doggerel on the ground that ' the children like it ' are merely libelling the children and revealing their own lack of taste. But Longfellow's poetical vein, if thin, is genuine, and Tennyson, in the opinion of the most competent judges now and always, is somewhere in the first dozen of English poets. Each of the three leading series of English literature books for schools—Dent's ' Kings' Treasuries,' Macmillan's ' English Literature Series,' and Newbolt's ' Teaching of English Series '—contains at least one suitable anthology of Narrative Poems. For an anthology for the lower forms it would be difficult to beat Mr. J. C. Smith's *Book of Verse for Boys and Girls*, Part III (Oxford Press). The poems are chosen with exquisite taste, and Part III contains so many advanced poems that the collection might serve right up to the Certificate age. But for laying the foundations of an historical knowledge of English poetry there is nothing like Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, with its chronological arrangement and its inclusion of nearly all the most famous lyrical pieces. The English Association's *Poems of To-day* has performed an immense service by enlarging the audience of living poets and by showing boys and girls that poetry is a living thing, not a dead product of past ages. But knowledge of

contemporary poetry should not be allowed to imply or to condone, ignorance of our rich poetical heritage. Nor should it be forgotten that much of modern literature, both prose and verse, is of limited educational value because of its deliberate divorce from reality : it is ' literature of escape,' not ' criticism of life.' ' The literature of the Romantic age,' wrote Sir Walter Raleigh,<sup>1</sup> ' showed a marked preference for themes that fell outside the realm of daily belief. It displayed an almost dangerous indifference to the conquests of Science. It sought less to interpret the world than to escape from it.' I should be one of the last to deny the delightfulness and beneficence of the ' literature of escape,' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* downwards. But literature has other and more vital uses besides, and it behoves the teacher to see that they are not overlooked.

<sup>1</sup> *On Writing and Writers* : extracts from his note-books, p. 200 (Arnold, 1926).



### XIII

#### ENGLISH IN THE HIGHER CERTIFICATE <sup>1</sup>

IN planning our method of procedure in the last two years of the secondary school (16 to 18), we have continually to bear in mind two dissimilar purposes. We have to lay the right sort of foundation for those who are fortunate enough to go to the university, but we have also to devise a course that will be helpful to those whose formal and systematic education comes to an end when they pass out from the school. Luckily, the two aims are not really so incompatible as might appear at first sight. For though the school, after the First Certificate stage has been safely passed, is to prepare definitely for the university, we do not want to imitate university methods too closely. To do this is to risk sending up pupils to the university already weary of the lecture-room, when they ought to be inspired with a fresh enthusiasm for it. What university teachers most often complain of is that their students come to them wholly lacking in a background of culture. Outside their set-books of a special period the students are said to know little or nothing. If we can do something in the last two years of school-life to supply a background—not a veneer—of general culture, we have performed a far more valuable service than if we have prematurely anticipated the research that is proper to university study. But it is precisely

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Education*, September 1930.

this background of general culture which the boys and girls who are going out into the world need above all things. It will make just all the difference to them if they leave school aware of the distinguishing characteristics of the last three centuries in architecture, painting, poetry and prose literature, and social life, and able to turn quickly to the books by whose help they can further advance their knowledge and train their taste.

Here I know that the critic will wearily interpose an objection. 'Precisely,' he will say; 'you are talking as if Higher Certificates did not exist. If they didn't, there is nothing I should like better than to devote the last two years of school-life to general culture. As it is, the thing is impossible. It takes me all my time to get through the prescribed books in the two years.' To which argument I can only reply that I conceive that the practical problem for the individual teacher, who cannot alter educational systems to suit himself, is how to work the system he finds himself under with the maximum of good and the minimum of harm. Of the examination-system we may say what the Roman satirist said of Fortune: *Te, Fortuna, deam facimus caeloque locamus.*

I believe that the teacher who keeps examinations in their proper place, as ensuring definiteness in the work done and the necessary amount of revision, and refuses to bend all his efforts to deliberate mark-getting, will be nearly or quite as successful in examination results as the teacher who allows himself to be hag-ridden by the examination-spectre, and he will have educated his pupils as the examination-devotees will never do. I incline to think that most of us need

the constraint of examinations to save us from mere desultoriness and aimlessness, and to teach our pupils business-like or, what is the same thing, scientific methods of work. Yet to think of examinations always or mainly is to deprive our teaching of all inspiring quality. The real test of a schoolmaster's work is to be found in the mental outlook of his pupils at the end of their university training and in after-years.

But if the true objective for all our pupils in the last two years is general culture, they will have but a small chance of reaching it unless the teacher himself has attained thereto. In what proportion of schoolmasters do we find a really high standard of general culture? Let us resist the temptation to criticize the shortcomings of our colleagues, and put ourselves to a strict scrutiny. Are we satisfied with the minimum of knowledge that is indispensable for the teaching of the prescribed book, or do we seek to illuminate the 'text' in as many ways as possible with the help of books and pictures and music and recollections of travel? What are we ourselves thinking of in the precious hours that we save from routine duties? Are our thoughts wholly occupied in those hours with bridge, golf, motoring, and cross-word puzzles, or do we find a substantial part of our recreation in the things of the mind?

The schoolmaster whose heart is not in his task does not read educational papers. I am preaching only to the converted. Yet I am so strongly convinced of the paramount importance to the English teacher of seizing every chance for cultivating his literary taste and judgment that I make no apology for devoting a large part of my article to this particular end. I can more



usefully, I feel, direct his attention to the kind of book that will help him in this quest than attempt detailed advice about prescribed books. I assume that he is familiar already with such standard works as Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* and Elton's *Survey of English Literature*. But I should like to mention some recent volumes, not all of them widely known as yet, that he will find at once recreative and inspiring. There are the *Collected Essays* of the late W. P. Ker (2 vols., Macmillan) and his *Form and Style in Poetry* (Macmillan); *Words and Poetry*, by G. H. W. Rylands (Hogarth Press); *English Prose Style*, by Herbert Read (Bell); the Hogarth Lectures—especially Blunden on *Nature in Literature*, F. L. Lucas on *Tragedy*, Muir on *The Structure of the Novel* (Hogarth Press); Hugh I'Anson Faucett's *Tennyson* (Cape); *Nine Essays*, by Arthur Platt (Cambridge); *The Continuity of Letters*, by John Bailey (Oxford), and his little books on *Milton* and *Dr. Johnson* in the 'Home University Library' and on *Shakespeare* in the 'English Heritage Series'; *The Profession of Poetry*, by H. W. Garrod (Oxford); *Essay on Keats*, by R. Bridges (Oxford); *A Miscellany*, by A. C. Bradley (Macmillan); the volumes of *Essays and Studies* published by the English Association, and the *Essays by Divers Hands* published by the Royal Society of Literature (Oxford Press).<sup>1</sup>

The general practice of examining bodies is, whilst setting plays of Shakespeare and sometimes Chaucer tales which must be studied by all candidates, to pre-

<sup>1</sup> Three modest little books which also deserve mention are: *The Nature of English Poetry: an Elementary Survey*, by L. S. Harris (Dent); *Thought in English Prose*, by J. C. Dent; and *Thought and Feeling in English Verse*, by J. H. Blackie (Heinemann)

scribe a special period of English literature with two lists of books, one for intensive study and one for general reading. Some of the universities allow an alternative, a list of masterpieces chosen from the whole chronological range of English literature. This alternative has presumably been invented to meet the wishes of teachers who adopt the view taken in the present article of the principles that should guide schools in work after the School Certificate. But whilst I recognize the attractiveness of this eclectic programme, I am inclined to prefer the special period: Restriction of the bulk of the reading to one period makes it possible for even the young student to steep himself in one particular literary atmosphere. He can become familiar with the social and political conditions out of which the books grew. Moreover, intensive study can be carried out better when the set-books belong to one period: the student comes to recognize the special nuances of words in the writers of one particular generation—the eighteenth-century meanings, for example, of ‘enthusiasm,’ ‘amuse,’ ‘discover.’

When a special period has been chosen, so much of the history of the period as is necessary for the understanding of the books to be read should be mastered as soon as possible. A short but stimulating course of lectures will be of great assistance. In preparing these the teacher will find valuable illustrative material in a recent series called *English Life in English Literature* (Methuen, 6 vols.) Next, we must determine which of the set-books require exhaustive treatment in class, and which can be left to private reading, with (perhaps) an introductory talk, and with (certainly) a concluding



lecture to bring home the essential characteristics of the book.

One hour in each week should be kept, if possible, free from set-books and devoted to the advanced study of composition. One term's lessons could be given expressly to the study of metre. Here authorities are so violently opposed to each other that many teachers may be disposed to abandon the study in disgust. Some who have been discouraged in this way would find their interest and their courage reviving if they tried a recent book, *The Metres of English Poetry*, by Enid Hamer (Methuen). Mr. E. E. Reynolds's *Book of Blank Verse* (Macmillan) could be made the basis of an interesting series of lessons; so could any of the lyrical anthologies, one of which should be kept in constant use in the school. Précis need not be entirely abandoned after the School Certificate, and a variety of ingenious composition-exercises may be devised to fill up odd five-minutes. Among these may be mentioned the finding of rhymes, of synonyms and of antonyms, and the interpretation of difficult but striking quotations. Practice in essay-writing will mainly be given in connexion with the set-books. The plan of asking for 'appreciations,' it should be noted, is labour-saving for the teacher, but is apt to be unprofitable. The better way is to ask for a comparison, whether between characters or between the methods of different poets, or to quote some provocative criticism and require a discussion of it.

One final word. Literary and debating societies have an uncertain life at school, flourish exceedingly in one year and languish in another. No teacher who is at pains to encourage them unobtrusively will find



his labour wasted, for the intellectual life of the school is largely dependent upon them. Dramatic societies are in a separate category. They too may be of immense help to the mental life. The lovely diction of *Twelfth Night*, its wit and its pathos, have been an unfailing joy to the writer of this article for more than half a century ; and all because it was produced by a school dramatic club.. But such societies woefully miss their opportunity, and weaken and distract, instead of strengthening and elevating, when they burden the memory instead with the banalities of contemporary comedy or the empty jingles of second-rate light opera.

## XIV

### SCHOOL LIBRARIES <sup>1</sup>

IT is not easy for one whose contribution to the discussion comes fourth upon the list to guess beforehand what previous speakers will have left for him to say. I will ask you to believe that all the brilliant points which you have welcomed in the papers to which we have listened occurred to me also as I prepared my discourse. You will in your fairness give me credit for them all; and besides that you will, in your generosity, give me additional credit for sparing you the necessity of hearing all these brilliant points made stale, flat and unprofitable by repetition.

What, then, is left for me? I look to my individual experience for an answer. You probably asked me to speak to you because I was invited by the English Association in 1915 to draw up a pamphlet on the subject of school libraries, and because that pamphlet has lately been reprinted by the English Association.<sup>2</sup> And I presume that I owed my invitation to write that pamphlet to my experience at Clifton College, where I was librarian for seventeen years and member of the library committee for twenty-seven years.

Few even of the great public schools of England have a library record that would bear the scrutiny of

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the Library Association at its Annual Conference, September 1928.

<sup>2</sup> English Association, Pamphlet No. 33.

a conference of librarians. Those are most to be envied which have a definitely collegiate tradition. Eton and Winchester, as you know, have peculiarly close affinities to colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, and they share therefore in the fine tradition that a noble collection of books is an essential part of an educational equipment, that these books should be, as far as possible, the best of their kind, that no binding can be too good for them, that they shall be housed with becoming dignity, and that the home in which they are placed shall be esteemed a temple of learning and approached with reverential awe. A school of modern origin, like Clifton, which was founded in 1862, starts with no such advantages. There do not seem to have been even the beginnings of a library till the school had been in existence for five years, though we may, I hope, assume that in some of the classrooms and in some of the boarding-houses there were collections of books from the first. When the school library was begun in 1867 it was tied on corporally and financially to a school museum: I imagine that this was a common practice. Both library and museum grew at first in a highly unscientific and unalluring manner. The widow of the founder sent his collection of obsolete or obsolescent theology; old boys sent cases of butterflies, stuffed owls and horns of stags, for which they had no longer room in their own homes. The beginnings of a better time, the pursuit of a worthier ideal, date from the appointment to the post of librarian of my predecessor, Mr. Trice Martin, whose chapter on 'School Libraries' in Mr. Percy Barnett's well-known book, *Teaching and Organization*, may still be read with pleasure and profit.



Happily, the library has long since swallowed up the museum as completely as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians. It is now a lofty, long and spacious room, adorned with Medici reproductions of old masters and with other pictures and portraits, and with cases of coins, rare books and autographs, and its shelves, tables and comfortable chairs are accessible throughout the day to all members of the upper school. More than that, in the new science buildings there is a separate scientific library, splendidly housed. There are smaller libraries, largely of fiction, in each of the boarding and town houses and in the sanatorium. But though Clifton is far from standing alone, there is grave reason to doubt how far school governing bodies have generally realized that every school needs a room wholly set apart for a library. The last Board of Education report on Secondary Education in Wales tells us that only eight secondary schools in the whole principality enjoy this advantage. We must advance from the idea that a library is a desirable appendage to a clear realization that it is an educational necessity.

All modern educational methods tend to make the library more important. This is not merely because 'the true modern University is a collection of books.' I think we have come to see that this famous dictum of Carlyle needs some qualification—that no amount of reading without discrimination or guidance will make a man learned, still less will it make him master of his learning. I would rather say that *the modern library is a laboratory for research*, and that *the modern conception of education is largely self-education through practice of research*.

There is indeed a superstition about books which

the librarian, as an expert in books, should seek to discourage ; I mean the superstition that there is any particular virtue in reading a book through. I know, of course, that the great book is to be ' read, marked (but not with pencil marks, if you please !), learned, and inwardly digested ' ; and wholeheartedly I believe that most of us would be the better for reading some of the great old books through and through and again and again instead of reading, say, all or any of the fifty novels which reviewers assert to be the best of the current year. But few books—even of those which the student is compelled to use—are great books ; and *one secret of mental growth is learning to pluck the heart out of a book rapidly.*

As a reviewer I am often asked, ' Do you read through the books that you review ? ' Some of my friends imagine that there must be some failure of conscientiousness on my part when I admit that often I do not read a book through. The truth is that on three books out of four an expert can pronounce judgment after half-an-hour's inspection, and he would not be better qualified to pronounce it if he spent seven or eight hours in reading every word. May I draw a moral from this for the school librarian ? His aim should be to help boys and girls to acquire this art of getting quickly out of a book what they want to find. Therefore *he should make access to books easy, and the exchange of books easy and rapid.*

If I am not presuming too much, there are three classes of people whom I should like to reach with a word of counsel.

First, to professional librarians may I say : cultivate friendly relations with the library authorities of the



school in your district. Do not be discouraged if you find them amazingly amateurish. Probably you will, unless you have the good fortune to be taken, as I was some years ago, to the library of Cheltenham Ladies' College, which I should like every school librarian to see. It is for you to help school librarians to an appreciation of business-like methods and of all the labour-saving devices which experts have introduced. Perhaps you will be able to praise some one department in which you find their library unexpectedly strong, and to encourage them to make it stronger still. Every librarian should aim at reaching excellence in at least one direction, if he cannot reach it in several. Now and again you will meet a school librarian whom it is a pleasure and an inspiration to know; a fine scholar, it may be, and a lover of books and in sympathy with youth. It will be strange, even after all your professional training, if there is nothing to be learnt from a talk with such an one.

And this brings me to the second class to whom I would fain say a word—the schoolmasters. I spent thirty-six years of my life as a schoolmaster, and there are no hours to which I look back with greater pleasure than those which I spent upon the school library. It was the most delightful of hobbies, and a more ingenious person than I could have made it more delightful still. For one thing, the school library gives the librarian pleasant points of contact with his colleagues. He can learn the interest of their several studies, and win their gratitude by his alertness to discover and obtain for them the best and newest books upon their subject. Quietly and unobtrusively he can do much to keep alight the lamp of learning in



the school ; alas, it does not always burn brightly in all our schools. He can teach reverence for books, and his delight in editions that are specially beautiful, or specially interesting for historical reasons, will communicate itself to others and lay the foundations of tastes that may enrich the lives of his pupils in years to come. And whatever drudgery his task may involve, however scantily his labours may be remunerated by the governing body, his reward will come in quite unforeseen and delightful ways. I recall that one of the most valued friendships of my own life began with a boy's ingenuous question, ' Can you tell me of any book that has anything in it about the Golden Age ? ' It was long before Mr. Wells had produced his *Outline of History* to tell us what is known or conjectured of prehistoric ages, and to replace the myths of the classics by the myths of modern science, and the question perplexed me not a little. But I took Shelley from his shelf, and found the chorus in *Hellas* :

The world's great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn.

Or, again, I like to remember how another old pupil whose name, if I gave it you, you would know far better than my own, has told me that his interest in history began from my chance remark that it made all the difference if you read your history lesson in two books instead of one, because then you found that historical knowledge was not something to be learnt out of a book, but something to be arrived at by a

comparison of differing accounts or differing views. And if you stick to your post long enough, you will surely have, as I had, the luck to become a myth yourself. 'Do you know how I first heard of you?' a lady once said to me. 'My brother was at Clifton, and he said, "We have an extraordinary chap at our school who has read every book written in the English language."' I should be sorry to have to live up to that description, but at least I can thank the librarian's post for having given me the palm without the dust.

Lastly, one word to any who have the inclination to play the part of generous patrons to a school library. Wealth is not needed; any one of us has, or can acquire, some object of interest or value which will be ten times more interesting or valuable in a public library than in a private house. One such benefactor may give a set of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, or the *Oxford English Dictionary*, or the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, which the school authorities cannot afford to buy. Another may give an early printed book, a first edition, or the facsimile of a first edition, of an English classic. A third may give an autograph letter which will make a statesman or a general, a poet or a historian, seem for the first time a real man to the boys who look upon it. Whilst I was writing this paper there came to me from the mother of an old pupil, as a gift to Clifton Library, an unpublished autograph letter from Carlyle to the publisher Murray. It is brief, as befits the apostle of golden silence, and I will conclude my paper by reading it, so giving you the benefit of the first publication:

CHELSEA,  
30th November, 1846.

DEAR SIR,

You must come to me directly—this evening any time after five, for a few minutes. I hope I have a little bit of good news to tell you.

Yours truly,

T. CARLYLE.

I just add that my researches have so far failed to discover with certainty what the good news was ; but 1846 was the year in which Mrs. Carlyle thanked God that *Cromwell* was finished, and prayed that she might never hear of him again.



## APPENDIX I

### *Notes for Essays*

#### I. HISTORY AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

##### 1. *What are the main uses of the study of History?*

'History repeats itself' is the proverbial justification of the study, and Thucydides (I. 22) can be quoted in its support. Yet, as Burke says, 'Louis the XVIth was a diligent reader of history; but the very lamp of prudence blinded him.' Historical analogies are often deceptive. Even accomplished historians deduce opposite lessons—Froude was a Conservative, Freeman a Radical. The use of history is something more subtle. The study (1) 'liberalises politics' by widening our outlook, enabling us to comprehend and judge intelligently the points of view of other parties or other nations, to see the larger tendencies of things. It also helps to save us from the petty personalities of the baser politics. (2) This widening of the imagination and quickening of sympathy goes much further than politics. We may like Erasmus 'live on terms of intimacy with other ages than our own.' 'To be with Acton,' it was said, 'was like being with the cultivated mind of Europe incarnate in its finest characteristics.' The ideal of a 'liberal education' is realized by those who study history in this spirit.

(3) For intelligent Patriotism some knowledge of our country's history is required; for intelligent Cosmopolitanism some knowledge of the history of mankind.

(4) History is no longer merely a 'branch of literature': it is a science, and trains its students as rigorously as any other science in patient observation, comparison, judgment.

Yet (5) we need not repudiate the connexion with

literature, nor the 'use' of the delight we may derive from the spectacle of the pageant of humanity.

2. *Letters, diaries and speeches as historical evidence.*

All may be very valuable : about some periods (*e.g.* the age of Cicero and Caesar) they are our best evidence : but all need to be received with caution. About each we have to ask (1) Had the writer means of knowing the truth ? (2) Are we sure he wished to speak the truth ?

(1) A statement in a letter, diary or speech may not be first-hand evidence at all : it may be merely a hearsay statement, or it may refer to some long-past event. In determining whether we are to attach importance to it, we must take into account the character of the speaker and the historical standard of his age (*e.g.* a bit of earlier Athenian history in Demosthenes or of Roman in Cicero).

(2) The motives that may distort truth are different in the three cases :

(a) Was the letter confidential or was it written with publication in view ? What was the writer's object ? Had he anything to gain by misrepresentation ?

(b) Was the diary a frank outpouring of the writer's feelings, or deliberately manufactured to influence the judgment of posterity like Napoleon's conversations at St. Helena ? Even if the diarist was honest, can we be sure that he knew his own motives (*e.g.* Bacon) ?

(c) A speech seeks to persuade : it is therefore seldom impartial evidence. But a speech that is far from impartial may still be valuable evidence of the arguments that would appeal to a particular audience. This (*e.g.*) is the special value of the speeches in Thucydides, whether in any particular case they reproduce a speech actually delivered or not.

Letters and diaries have a more intimate charm than speeches and throw more light on the life of an age, but all three kinds of evidence help to make history more real to us : we catch the very tones of the actors in the events of the past.

3. *'Pericles made one fatal error. He built an arch, but forgot that he was himself the keystone.'*

The Athenian Empire under Pericles was a highly artificial structure resting on the unwilling contributions of allies. By means of these, Athenian citizens were paid for work on public buildings and (at least indirectly, through fines and fees) as jurors. Other Athenian citizens were given 'cleruchies,' also at the expense of the allies. In these ways he secured for the citizens a wonderful artistic and intellectual education. His policy also involved enmity to Sparta and commercial rivalry with Corinth. It therefore involved the Peloponnesian War, and though that could have been won by the policy of Pericles, no other statesman could persuade the Athenians to the necessary self-restraint. Nor could the allies be held together any longer. Between the selfish ambition of Alcibiades, the insolence of demagogues, and the disloyalty of oligarchs, the ruin of the city came swiftly. [See 'Thuc. II. 65.]

4. *'A poetical embodiment of the whole Greek character. Discuss Alexander from this point of view.'*

The two typical Greek heroes are the contrasted pair, Achilles and Odysseus. Alexander recalls both. Achilles was his favourite hero, and in invading Asia from Greece he loved to think that he was treading in Achilles' footsteps, as later on it consoled him in his sorrow for Hephaestion to emulate the grief of Achilles for Patroclus. Like Achilles he is the spoilt fretful darling of the gods; and there is over him the same presage of 'one crowded hour of glorious life' and early doom. But he is statesman and man of intellect as well as warrior, and in his inquiring mind, his interest in travel and the cities and government of men, he recalls the hero of the *Odyssey*. He could never have lived to old age; but if we could imagine him old, his could only be the old age of Tennyson's Ulysses: he would have called to his companions to set forth on yet another quest, 'to sail beyond the sunset.'



Some less pleasing sides of Greek character have their embodiment in Alexander, but this too is a 'poetical embodiment'—outbursts of unrestrained passion in which the Greeks seem children by the side of the moderns, or the theatrical burning of the palace of Persepolis. Such excesses do not lessen the poetry and romance which attend his career throughout and are conspicuously absent from the story of Dionysius I. or of Augustus.

5. *The debt of modern Europe to Greece.* 'Take away from us what they (the ancient Greeks) have given; and I hardly can imagine how low the modern European would stand' (RUSKIN).

'If we are to name one word as summing up the Greek genius, it would be the word *intelligence*.'

Two dominant, yet opposite, characteristics meet us everywhere in Greek history and literature, *Freedom* and *Order*. *Freedom* shows itself in the claim for *αὐτονομία* and *παρρησία*, in boldness of thought and discussion, in the development of new literary forms, in the beginnings of science, in universal curiosity. *Order* shows itself in the creation of the *πόλις*, the hatred of *τυραννίς*, the worship of *νόμος*, the literary and ethical maxim *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, in the restraint of Greek tragedy, in rhythm, in sculpture. Both qualities are reconciled in *Intelligence*—*νοῦς*, which, as Anaxagoras said, 'set all things in order.' That a State should be governed by philosophers is not merely the visionary ideal of Plato or his pupil Dion. Early Greece exalts its 'Seven Sages'; cities choose thinkers as legislators; Pythagorean brotherhoods rule in Magna Graecia; Solon 'applies reason to politics'; Pericles in the Funeral Speech exalts Athens as a free and orderly State governed by reason; Xenophon's Ten Thousand are led by argument; Herodotus thinks abstract political discussion so natural that he ascribes it to Persian conspirators. Greek Intelligence conquered the world with Alexander, and has dominated all living periods of history ever since.

6. *The debt of modern Europe to ancient Rome.*

(1) Even if it is true that 'Except the blind forces of Nature nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin' [an over-statement], we owe the debt to Rome which preserved and transmitted Greek civilization; and the Pax Romana of the early Empire made possible the speedy diffusion of Christianity.

(2) The Empire lasted long enough in the West—through its perpetuation by Charlemagne and Otto—to keep before men's minds the ideal of orderly government while the new nations were in the making. (3) Roman law persisted. (4) Latin has persisted in the Romance languages, and has given large elements to the Teutonic languages. (5) Rome's influence survives in architecture, roads, commerce, the calendar. (6) We owe to Rome not merely the gift of Latin literature, but the modern writers it has influenced. (7) For many generations European statesmen have been brought up on Cicero and Livy, and have imbibed ideas of government from them in boyhood. (8) Our debt rather increases than diminishes, because (a) modern research brings the life of ancient Rome nearer to us, (b) modern empires recall the conditions of Imperial Rome.

7. *Was Julius Caesar or Augustus the greater statesman?*

Julius died when his work was only just begun: Augustus lived long, and had the powerful support of Agrippa and Maecenas, and his work lasted. If by statesmanship we mean primarily the ability to win men's consent to your schemes, the palm must be given to Augustus with his unparalleled skill in securing the essentials of power and satisfying men's prejudices with names. But if we put highest the larger vision, the capacity to grasp the needs of an empire and the world, and to project reforms that shall meet those needs, the greater credit belongs to Julius as the first Roman to frame a policy that might replace misgovernment, anarchy and chaos by sound government,



law and order. His were the schemes for regulating Italian municipia and Rome itself, for governing the provinces by *legati* responsible to himself, and for applying scientific intelligence to finance. How much more he intended (*e.g.* the extension of the franchise, the Italo-Hellenic policy with which Mommsen credits him) we cannot know. Augustus's service to the world was that he carried out with infinite tact and pains some of the great ideas which his uncle conceived.

8. '*The happiest period in human history.*' Justify or dispute this description of the Age of the Antonines.

Probably till we reach the British and German Empires of the late nineteenth century we can find no period in which over so large a part of the earth's surface the material prosperity of the governed was sought by governments with so much conscientiousness and enlightenment. In one respect the later period even contrasts unfavourably: the vast military preparations that burdened the nations and issued in the war of 1914. And if slavery was nominally absent from the later period, it may be questioned whether the industrial slavery of a large part of the population (not sought by government, but produced by economic conditions which humane legislation relieved but did not remove) was not nearly as bad. The leading characteristics of the Antonine Age were (1) The rule of the fittest: each Emperor adopted as his son a public servant who showed himself capable of rule; (2) Happy relations of Emperor and Senate; (3) Development of municipal government; (4) The organization of a Civil Service under Emperors who cared for the provinces equally with Rome [*cp.* Trajan's letters to Pliny]; (5) The Pax Romana through the civilized world—wars only on the frontiers; (6) Humane legislation—a new thing in the world—for slaves, orphans and poor; (7) The influence of Stoicism, with its high ideals, felt alike by emperor and slave [Aurelius, Epictetus]. No doubt the age contained also the seeds of decay: the uneconomic production of a



slave-system, excessive 'socialistic' expenditure by the State with the consequent necessity for over-taxation of the middle classes, and the decline of independence fostered by bureaucracy.

9. *'There was no such thing as a specific fall of the Roman Empire.'*

The taking of Rome by Alaric (410), the end of the Western Empire (476), are landmarks in human history, but they are only symbols of a change that took many centuries to complete, if indeed it was ever completed.

(1) The coming of barbarians into the Empire was a very gradual process, begun long before 410: they were awed by the civilization they found, and they learnt and perpetuated much of it, especially Roman law.

(2) The Eastern monarchy still represented the Roman Empire, and for a time (Justinian) even asserted its power over Italy: it lasted at Constantinople till 1453.

(3) What the State lost, the Church largely won: the Popes succeeded in the West to much of the prestige of the Emperors.

(4) The assumption<sup>o</sup> of the Patriciate by Pippin, the crowning of Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Empire founded by Otto the Great in 962 and not wholly lapsing till 1806, were all tokens that in the West men still regarded the Empire of Rome as part of the natural order of things. This idea dominated European thought through the Middle Ages.

10. *'Before we are able to grasp at all the literature, art or life of the Middle Ages, we must form a clear conception of three types of character, the mediaeval king, the mediaeval priest, and the mediaeval craftsman' (RUSKIN). Describe the three types, with the help of any notable examples.*

From the legends that surround Charlemagne or St. Louis or from chronicles we may gather types of the mediaeval king—himself a feudal lord among feudal lords,

warrior and chivalrous knight, raised above the rest by the Church's anointing; a saint sometimes, more often a proud hasty sinner, but doing penance in that case with strange humbleness; fighting Paynim under the Church's banner; the father of his people, concerned for their welfare and education, and protecting them against other lords.

Of the priest we may take three types: (1) the great priests, abbots, cardinals, pope, the last a monarch, the rest feudal lords or statesmen; (2) the monk, living apart in the monastery, poor at first and strenuous, often a student—in later days often idle and luxurious; (3) the friars, self-sacrificing missionaries among the poor in the best cases, gross and sensual, 'devourers of widows' houses' in the degenerate type.

In the ideal craftsman we may note (1) his artistic sense ennobling rude times, and the joy in work that was more possible before machinery turned out hundreds of articles exactly alike, (2) his professional pride, to which trade secrets, close corporations and rules of apprenticeship, pageants and processions of guilds, all contributed.

#### 11. *What was the connexion between the Renaissance and the Reformation?*

The Renaissance is an accepted term for both (a) the fresh study of Greek and Roman art and literature in the fifteenth century and the 'new birth' of art and literature that accompanied this study, and (b), more generally, the widening of men's thoughts and interests that marked the transition from mediaeval to modern Europe.

To the Renaissance in sense (a) the Reformation is related partly as a consequence, partly as a reaction. The new studies undermined the authority of the Church: in history, philosophy and science, students claimed independence of the traditional Church teaching: Erasmus's New Testament encouraged independent thinking in theology. But the enthusiasm for pagan art and literature, shared by high ecclesiastics, had its evil side; and the



Reformation was partly a moral revolt from the corruption of the papacy (cp. Savonarola in Florence).

Of the Renaissance in sense (*b*) the Reformation may itself be regarded as a part. Thus Erasmus, Colet and More represent both the Renaissance and the Reformation. But the subsequent course of the Reformation was not such as they would have approved: enlightenment and freedom of thought were not its aims: if the overthrow of Rome's authority eventually worked in this direction, it was not because reformers sought this, but because when the old authority was shaken no other could successfully take its place. Also, to a certain extent the Reformation was independent of the Renaissance—a movement in favour of simplicity and purity in religion derived from Wyclif and Huss rather than from the new enlightenment.

12. *'The spacious times of great Elizabeth.'* How do you account for the reign being such an epoch in English literary history?

(1) The world was literally more 'spacious' than in the Middle Ages. Geographical discovery and astronomical discovery had given men 'a new heaven and a new earth.'

(2) The re-discovery of the Greek and Roman classics had widened men's minds by the fresh revelation of two ancient civilizations and two great literatures.

(3) The Renaissance was late in coming to England, but it had come fully now; and it brought with it, besides Greek, the stimulus of the literary renaissance in Italy and France.

(4) The English Bible was the revelation of another great literature; and it was a literature in beautiful English (the Great Bible, 1539).

(5) The circumstances of the time—the revolt from Rome, the Tudor monarchy, maritime enterprise—encouraged the rapid growth of a strong national feeling.

(6) Inspired partly by the example of the Augustan literature, English men of letters deliberately sought to create a literature worthy of a great court and nation.



(7) To all these causes must be added the incalculable element of genius: Shakespeare *nascitur, non fit*.

13. *The permanent effects of the Puritan Revolution on English life and history.*

(1) *Religious*. (a) The 'tripartite' division of English religion (Roman, Anglican, Nonconformist) begun by Elizabeth's settlement was made permanent. (b) As Puritan creeds asserted the right and duty of private judgment in religion, their victory inevitably led to the establishment of the principle of toleration, though only a few—and they not all on the Puritan side (Cromwell, Vane; Falkland, Selden)—were in favour of toleration.

(2) *Moral*. The attempt to impose a too rigid religion and morality provoked the pagan reaction of the Restoration. But Puritanism has persisted as a strong force in English life to the present day.

(3) *Artistic*. This force was destructive to art in painting, architecture, poetry, music; though it is possible to exaggerate the evil influence, for (a) Puritanism had its own great works of art, *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*; (b) the artistic impulse of the Elizabethan times had exhausted itself.

(4) *Political*. England was saved from the Absolutism which prevailed on the Continent: the responsibility of Ministers and the supremacy of Parliament were secured.

14. *Compare and contrast the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century with the French Revolution of the Eighteenth.*

Both Revolutions were against the absolutism of hereditary kings, and in both a military despotism resulted at one stage from the overthrow of the old order.

But (1) the causes in England were definite grievances which the leaders were resolved to remove. In France the causes were deeper and wider, if vaguer, and worked upon by literary influences which set up reason in place of authority.

(2) The leaders in England were men of experience who entered into the struggle with a profound sense of responsibility : in France they were theorists. In England the leaders were religious : in France they were hostile to religion, or to any religion beyond a sentimental deism.

(3) In England there was no desire to break with the past. In France the desire quickly grew to make a clean sweep of the old order.

Hence (4) at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was more Feudalism left in England than in France, though England had been enjoying constitutional government since 1689.

15. *The Causes and the Consequences of Whig Ascendancy in the Eighteenth Century.*

*Causes.* The great Whig families had a steady majority in the House of Lords and (by means of parliamentary 'management,' rotten boroughs and pocket boroughs) in the House of Commons. They filled and supported the Cabinets. By the Revolution of 1688 power had largely passed from the Crown to Parliament and the Ministers. The Hanoverians owed their throne to the Whigs, and were bound to support them, as the Tories were many of them Jacobites. Hence Whig Cabinet government rested on the support of Lords, Commons and King.

It also had much support from the nation. The traders liked a government which gave England commercial prosperity, and disliked the unsettlement of Stuart risings. Dissenters and Catholics were conciliated by toleration. The Tories had no able leaders, except Bolingbroke, who was not trusted ; and the country gentry, who were Tory, took little part in politics.

*Consequences.* (1) The War of the Spanish Succession gave us the command of the sea, and Walpole's government built up the material prosperity of England. (2) The basis of government was broad enough to save England from the evils of the monarchical government in France and consequently from the violence of the French Revolution.



(3) Government was nevertheless corrupt, and there was an absence of high ideals. Nothing was done for the peasantry or the poor of the towns. The two most inspiring leaders of the century, the two Pitts, cannot be claimed for the Whigs: for though the elder Pitt was nominally Whig, he rose by opposition to the Whig party. Nor can Burke: for though professing the principles of 'the glorious Revolution' of 1688, he supported against Fox the Tory government of the younger Pitt.

16. '*Acquired in a fit of absence of mind.*' Discuss the truth of this as an account of the extension of the British Empire between 1820 and 1880.

1. The expansion of the Empire in this period is amazing. In India we have the annexation of Sindh (1842, C. Napier), the Punjab, Nagpur, Oudh, Lower Burma (Dalhousie, 1848-56); in China, Hongkong (1842); the rapid settlement of Australia, leading up to the foundation of the Commonwealth in 1901; the annexation of New Zealand in 1839 in consequence of difficulties between British traders and natives; the foundation of a Parliament for the Dominion of Canada in 1867, with the accession of British Columbia, 'a province twice the size of France'; the stormy progress of South Africa (Natal, Orange River Settlement, Transvaal), which was to issue peacefully in the Union of South Africa, 1910.

2. Certainly the growth was not due to the policy of English statesmen. English governments were reluctant to undertake fresh responsibilities, and inclined to think it natural for colonies to fall away (like America) when they became self-supporting. The main causes of expansion were (1) the growth of British trade, (2) the enterprise of explorers, (3) the growth of our population and economic distress at home, (4) the pressure of circumstances—annexation was often necessary in self-defence.

3. England's success in colonization has been largely due to principles which have not been fully understood by other nations and have therefore led to charges of hypo-



crisis against us. (1) English free-trade doctrines led to the throwing open to foreign traders of all territories administered by the English Government: hence the absence of protests in the earlier stages from other European Powers. (2) The humanitarian principles (which abolished slavery in 1833) favoured the protection of backward races. (3) English belief in self-government led to our allowing diversity of constitutions and freedom to the colonies to develop on their own lines.

17. *Does the Victorian Age deserve to be spoken of slightly?*

Human progress, when there is any, is in a spiral curve, not a straight line: we react from one tendency by carrying the opposite tendency to an excess: hence each generation is peculiarly alive to the faults of its immediate predecessors. This explains much current criticism of the Victorian Age, when that criticism is not born of the sheer ignorance with which each youthful generation assumes that its own discoveries about life have never been made before.

So far as there is any indictment of the Victorian Age based upon evidence, it amounts to this. (1) The power of respectability and convention was greater than it is now: hence there was more hypocrisy. (2) The general level of artistic taste was low. (3) The Industrial Revolution was fast spoiling England. (4) The age entertained exaggerated hopes of a millennium to be reached by free trade and an unrestricted competition, in which the working classes were exploited for the benefit of the capitalist.

But it would be wrong to think it merely an age of the expansion of material wealth. It is that to a wonderful degree; and its scientific inventions, and their applications, will always be important for good and evil in human history. But its discoveries in the world of thought were equally great—e.g. the application of the principle of Evolution to moral and political philosophy as well as to

animal and plant life. Nor was any century of English history richer in great men ; thinkers, as Carlyle, Ruskin, M. Arnold, who saw the faults of their own age clearly ; poets, as Tennyson, Browning, W. Morris, Swinburne ; novelists, as Dickens, Thackeray, C. Brontë, George Eliot, Meredith ; scientific leaders, as Darwin, Huxley, Lister ; men of letters, as Macaulay, R. L. Stevenson ; artists, as Millais, Rossetti, Holman Hunt ; statesmen, as Gladstone and Disraeli—merely to mention these is to remind ourselves how little right we have to imagine that we are superior to the Victorians.

18. *The use and abuse of Symbols.* ' *As Time adds to the sacredness of Symbols, so he at length defaces or even desecrates them ; and Symbols, like all terrestrial garments, wax old* ' (CARLYLE, *Sartor*).

The use of Symbols is to touch the imagination and kindle the devotion. A nation, a party, a faith, a spiritual principle—each seems less of a vague abstraction, more of a reality, when we see it embodied in a concrete symbol. And when we see other men accept that symbol, give their devotion to it, we become conscious of that union which is strength.

But there is no more universal weakness of human nature than the tendency to save ourselves the trouble of reasoning, of deciding questions on their merits, of seeking the truth. And the symbol disguises this weakness from us, consecrates our prejudices. We shout for our party, and wave our flag, and dislike those who wish us to test our political catch-words, as the Athenians disliked Socrates' uncomfortable practice of asking for definitions.

The true antithesis is not between good and bad symbols. Almost any symbol may stand for a good or for a bad cause. But we need continually to carry our thoughts beyond the symbol ; for the best cause is corrupted when the letter takes the place of the spirit.



19. ' *There is written on the turrets of the city of Lucca in great characters at this day the word LIBERTAS : yet no man can thence infer that a particular man has more Liberty, or Immunity from the service of the Commonwealth, there than in Constantinople*' (HOBBS). *What is your idea of true political liberty?*

Vagueness in the use of this term is responsible for much confusion in political thought and argument ; and the vagueness is encouraged by the romantic associations attached to the word by poetry and rhetoric.

' Liberty ' has been used to denote (1) the freedom of a State or individual from foreign domination— independence, (2) freedom within the State from arbitrary government—constitutionalism, (3) the freedom of the individual from physical restraint—the opposite of slavery, (4) the power to do what one likes—the negation of law, anarchy, licence.

When Marat said ' We must establish the despotism of Liberty to crush the despotism of Kings,' he was relying partly on the second sense, but availing himself of the attractive associations of (3) and (4) ; he was at the same time denying the right of other States to (1). But, in fact, ' the despotism of Liberty ' is a meaningless contradiction of terms.

It is clear that in Lucca ' Liberty ' meant ' government of the citizens by themselves ' (as in a Greek πόλις). Such government may interfere more with the life of an individual citizen than an absolute government like the Turkish, which, lacking organization, may leave ordinary citizens under few restrictions.

The advantage of a democratic government is that it educates the ordinary citizen by giving him a share of responsibility. The drawback is that the tyranny of the majority may be more far-reaching than the tyranny of a despot or oligarchy, and so may crush out individuality. The problem of government is to give as much freedom as possible to the individual to develop in his own way whilst safeguarding the like freedom of development for all others.



10. '*To enthrone the ablest man is the true business of all social procedure*' (CARLYLE, *Heroes*). *Is this true? Answer with special reference to the career of Napoleon.*

By 'ablest' Carlyle means 'best fitted to rule.' So interpreted the words might seem at first sight a truism: the essential thing in government is to find the best ruler and let him rule. But (1) no even fairly satisfactory way of securing power for the man best fitted has yet been discovered: hereditary monarchy, popular dictatorships, presidential elections—the successes of all three are rarer than their failures. (2) The statement leaves out of sight the necessity to healthy national life that the citizens themselves should be part of the State, training their own intelligence by forming a judgment on national affairs, contributing their own part to working out the details of government. In a crisis the decision must lie with one or few, and well is it for that nation which has a leader it can trust. But the greatest man can accomplish little without the *intelligent* support of the people.

Of 'ability,' including the capacity to win and organize an empire and to dominate men's minds, Napoleon had perhaps as much as any man that ever lived. To his genius in war he added a mastery of the details of government, an infinite capacity for taking pains, that made his rule wonderfully efficient. But he sacrificed France as well as other nations to his own ambition. The ideal ruler must have no such fatal flaw of egoism.

## II. LITERATURE

21. *Is a standard possible in art and literature?*

Beauty (τὸ καλόν) is of all things the most elusive, the least susceptible of definition. When men lay down rules, fix a standard, in art, they tend to make the artist run in grooves: the originality and freshness which are essential to true art are in danger of disappearing.

Is there, then, to be no standard? Is 'taste' merely a

matter of fashion or of individual preference? The result of such a doctrine is anarchy—*chacun à son mauvais goût*—and the denial of any possibility of advance.

The truth seems to be that though rigid rules, such as exist in the exact sciences, cannot be applied to art, yet there is such a thing as an objective standard. (1) The opinion of the best judges as to the supreme artists is, on the whole, wonderfully unanimous. (2) Rules of art, as laid down by the best critics from Aristotle downwards, are framed from careful observation of the practice of these supreme artists; and so long as it is understood that the object of these rules is to assist the learner to comprehend the great artist and to save the newer generations from repeating old mistakes which the best practitioners have avoided, not to fetter the artist if he should choose deliberately to sacrifice a rule for some definite object which he has in view, such rules are of immense value. (3) *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*. As against the verdict of the general body of criticism, our private preferences are generally wrong. (4) A modest deference to the general body of criticism is far more of a help than of a hindrance to the formation of taste. Even a great genius may suffer—as Matthew Arnold points out in his essay on the *Functions of an Academy*—from the absence of a national standard.

22. 'Art is nature seen through a temperament, the facts seen by a particular mind.' Explain and illustrate from Painting or from Poetry.

Here lies the value of Art.

'We're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.

... Art was given for that.'

(BROWNING, *Fra Lippo Lippi*.)

(1) The painter teaches us to see with his eyes. In painting a landscape he simplifies for us the infinite complexity



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of nature, seizes certain aspects, detaches these, concentrates our attention upon them, and so makes it possible for us to realize their beauty. (2) Art is not imitation, but idealized imitation. The selective power of the painter is, in its way, the action of mind upon matter, calling Order out of Chaos (cp. Millais' *Chill October* with a 'snap-shot' of the tangled weeds of a river-backwater). It is not the defect but the glory of painter and poet that they give us 'The light that never was on sea or land.'

23. '*Eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard.*' Explain and illustrate the distinction here drawn. Are there any famous poems or passages in poetry to which the first description applies rather than the second?

Orator and poet deal with the same material—language—and to a certain extent in the same way: e.g. both use alliteration, rhythmical effects, imagery. But the orator's aim is to persuade: he must strike home at once. The poet's aim is self-expression: he is not writing for his audience of the moment: he has all time on his side: his effects are more subtle, and we need to listen for them carefully.

Passages in poetry that may be said to be 'heard' are: (1) speeches intended to be dramatically persuasive—e.g. the speeches in Homer or Mark Antony's funeral speech in *Julius Caesar* (contrast the soliloquies in *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* which are literally 'overheard'); (2) ballad poetry meant to be recited—though this often, as in *Sir Patrick Spens*, has a pathos that must be overheard; (3) didactic poetry—Pope's *Essay on Man*, Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*; (4) Byron's splendid effects in *Childe Harold* are perhaps rhetorical rather than poetical—they insist on being heard.

24. '*It is the essence of Satire that it never tells the whole truth about things or people.*' What, then, is its value?

(1) The satirist is (a) an artist, (b) a reformer. In neither capacity does he tell the whole truth. (a) His aim is to



please. 'A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure' (BACON). The truth has so many qualifications, that it is generally dull. (b) The mass of men are not governed by reason but by emotion: the satirist's over-statement attracts their attention and works upon their feelings. (2) As the satirist is moved by spleen, he can hardly be quite fair to the people he attacks. But we can make allowance for this unfairness, and still enjoy his art; just as we enjoy a caricature, which is pictorial satire, though aware that it distorts the features of the portrait. (3) Besides, up to a point satire can be kindly and sympathetic, as was Addison's. (4) When the evils attacked are serious, sympathy would be misplaced: we feel it is well that the writer should be indignant. (5) Besides the *artistic* and *moral* value of satire, there is its historical value as a picture of manners; but the historian must have a sense of humour or he will be apt to misunderstand the nature of the evidence.

25. *Why is 'Don Quixote' one of the great books of the world?*

(1) No doubt it is one of the greatest of satires. It hardly 'smiled Spain's chivalry away,' for that was dead already; but its ridicule of the knightly romances sent them out of fashion, though it is hard to believe that their popularity would in any case have lasted much longer. (2) But its satire is perhaps the least of its merits. Its hero is a perpetual joy, not because he is ridiculous, but because his creator (as Dickens with Pickwick) has fallen in love with his own creation and made him lovable. The weakness of satire is that it is unsympathetic (Juvenal, Swift): Cervantes' sympathy is as wide as Shakespeare's. (3) Caricature, which distorts the features, though we find it laughable at first, soon wearies us because we feel it to be untrue to life: Cervantes' characters are real human beings. The absurdities are never carried too far. Don Quixote is only mad 'north-north-west'; away from the influence of his books of chivalry he has a sound judgment. Sancho, for

all his unlettered simplicity, is a shrewd judge in the government of his 'Island'; and his proverbs (like Mrs. Poyser's in *Adam Bede*) are a storehouse of homely wisdom for succeeding generations. (4) *Don Quixote* admirably illustrates what Lamb calls 'the sanity of genius.' The characters are consistent with themselves: given the character of Don Quixote and the influence of books of chivalry, events follow logically. (5) The story is a moving pageant of the life of Spain in the sixteenth century—the merchants, monks, actors, carters, showmen, ladies, peasants, we should have encountered on her great roads. The picture is drawn for all time.

26. 'Milton has acknowledged to me that Spenser was his original' (DRYDEN, Preface to *Fables*). What did Milton owe to Spenser?

Milton, if he used the words, only meant, 'Spenser was my master from whom I learnt the art of poetry.' We may find confirmation of this in (1) the choice of styles—sonnets, pastoral, ode, epic; (2) the liquid melody of the *Nativity Ode* and much of *Lycidas* (cp. *Epithalamium*); (3) the love of masque, allegory and enchantment shown in *Comus* and *Il Penseroso*—'turneys and enchantments drear, Where more is meant than meets the ear'; (4) Milton originally thought of Arthur for the hero of an epic; (5) a fondness for archaic words, noted by Dryden as characteristic of both Milton and Spenser; (6) the use of classical constructions; (7) the use of high-sounding classical and geographical names, partly for the sake of learned allusion, partly for musical effect. These likenesses are stronger in Milton's early poems than in *Paradise Lost*, where he rises to a grander height than Spenser ever reached, but even there it is interesting to note Spenserian touches—to compare *Paradise Lost*, VI. 482-520 (the infernal cannon) with *Faerie Queene*, I. vii. st. 13, or the figure of Sin and the horrible offspring that 'when they list, into the womb That bred them they return, and howl



and gnaw My bowels, their repast' (*P.L.* II. 800) with the brood of Error in *F.Q.* I. i. sts. 15 and 25.

27. 'I have always thought "*Samson Agonistes*" the test of a man's true appreciation of Milton, and not a bad test of his appreciation of high literature' (SEELEY). Discuss both parts of this judgment.

(a) (1) The appreciation of *Samson Agonistes* is a good test of an appreciation of Milton, because there is so much of Milton himself in the poem. Probably few are interested in Samson unless they are able to sympathize with the blind old poet 'On evil days now fallen and evil tongues' (*Paradise Lost*, Bk. VII), troubled at the triumph of the Philistine nobles and the depression of 'God's Elect,' yet retaining his faith and courage unshaken, and accepting the lot, hard for an active and masterful nature, of one 'whom patience finally must crown.'

(2) In spite of its severe simplicity, *Samson Agonistes* is almost as full of literary (including Biblical) reminiscences as Milton's earlier poems, and demands the same knowledge on the reader's part.

(3) To enjoy Milton's rhythms is a fair test of 'a good ear' in poetry, and they are maturest in *Samson Agonistes*.

(b) Some of the greatest literature (e.g. Homer, Shakespeare) has universality of appeal. To be interested in it is no proof that we have literary taste: rather, to be unmoved by it would prove us deficient in human feeling. But to appreciate that supreme triumph of language which consists in using words with the maximum of *power* and *economy*, or the subtle effects of a great master of rhythm, is a thing attained by comparatively few.

But a *caveat* may be entered against making any one work a criterion of literary taste. Even great critics have their limitations, and fail of catholicity at some point: we may accept their praise with more certitude than their disparagement. And the critic is apt to choose as his test some work which he enjoys with the more gusto because he knows it is 'caviare to the general.'



28. 'He is with Shakespeare' (M. ARNOLD). *What are the Shakespearian qualities in Keats?*

The two most definitely Shakespearian qualities in Keats are exuberance and felicity of diction and a magical glamour only found in Coleridge between the Elizabethans and Keats. (1) Both Shakespeare and Keats 'surprise by a fine excess'—their store of imagery and rich jewelled words seems never to fail them. (2) The kinship between the Shakespeare of Milton's *L'Allegro*—'Fancy's child' who warbles 'his native wood-notes wild'—and Keats is very close. The Nature they loved is something different from Wordsworth's Nature—not so much a healing, as a thrilling, intoxicating influence. Cp. 'Where should this music be? i' the air or the earth?' (*Tempest*) with 'Was it a vision or a waking dream? Fled is that music—do I wake or sleep?' or 'Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds That come a-swooning over hollow grounds'; the moonlight sleeping on the bank in *Merchant of Venice*, or the scenery of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, with *Endymion*; Clarence's dream in *Richard III* with *Endymion*, Bk. 3; *Romeo and Juliet* with the *Eve of St. Agnes*; the Shakespearian quality of the sonnet on the greater qualities of ὁ μυριάδων (the myriad-souled) we cannot say. But he meant to make poetry the serious business of his life, and there are signs that he would have outgrown his boyish preference of *sensations to thoughts*.

29. 'He describes what he sees, I describe what I imagine—there is the difference between us' (KEATS on BYRON). *Discuss and illustrate.*

Byron's strength is in description: but (e.g. in the great passages of *Childe Harold*) he describes what the ordinary intelligent man sees for himself, though in language more perfect than the ordinary man can reach. His triumphs are akin to rhetoric—to the eloquence that is 'heard' rather than to the poetry that is 'overheard.'

Keats describes what he imagines—things we should never have imagined for ourselves. Autumn sitting on the granary floor—magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn—the little town that the procession on the Grecian Urn had left desolate—the ‘frosted breath’ of the Beadsman and a hundred other things in the *Eve of St. Agnes*—the room in the house near the Minster where the girl is reading the legend of St. Mark—Cortez’ men staring at each other with a wild surmise—in a lighter vein, the signboard of the Mermaid flying away to Elysium—Keats makes us see all these things, and they are all his own creations.

30. *In what ways does Tennyson specially interpret the thought and feeling of his age?*

(a) (1) In many ways Tennyson reflects the hopes and fears of his time—the dread of revolution (‘the red fool-fury of the Seine’)—apprehensions about the advance of democracy—would it bring war and anarchy or international peace (‘the Parliament of man, the federation of the world,’ ‘markets clear of toll’)?—and about the emancipation of women (*The Princess*). In all this his attitude is *Conservative*, advocating ‘a freedom slowly broadening down,’ though in his *Imperialism* he is in advance of his own day.

(2) He reflects the conflict between *Science* and *Religion*—accepts Evolution, even anticipates Darwin (*Origin of Species*, 1859) in *In Memoriam* (1850) whilst pleading for Reverence and a belief in God and Immortality.

(3) On the literary side he owes much to Wordsworth’s love of *Nature*, though Tennyson’s minute observation of Nature also draws from the Science of his time; much to the revived interest in the *classical* poets (through Keats and Shelley); much to the *romantic* interest in mediaevalism (through Scott and Coleridge); much to Shelley’s *metrical* experiments

(b) A poet’s *permanent value*, as distinct from his historic interest as the representative of a particular time,



depends on his permanent truth to Nature. Is his 'criticism (interpretation) of life' sound and deep? In some poems (*Ulysses* and parts of *In Memoriam*) Tennyson's poetry will stand this test, though he has grave limitations—his prejudices and his defective dramatic quality. [*Rizpah* is his finest dramatic poem: the heroes of *Maud*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Princess*, are only projections upon paper of his own moods.]

31. Is Tennyson's '*Ulysses*' or Browning's '*Saul*' the greater poem?

*Saul* and *Ulysses* are both dramatic monologues, *i.e.* in both the speaker is other than the poet. But whilst *Ulysses* might be a speech from a Virgilian epic, *Saul* has a lyrical quality which recalls a choric ode from a Greek tragedy; or, again, *Ulysses* suggests the finished art of Sophocles, *Saul* the rugged grandeur of Aeschylus or Euripides' intrusion of modern problems into ancient story.

Which is the more dramatic? As to the scenery: the Eastern effects in *Saul*—the blinding glare, the dry water-courses, the animal and plant life of the wilderness, harvest-song, marriage-song, death-song, sacred processions, witchery of night and intensity of dawn—are magnificent. There is little 'local colour' in *Ulysses* in spite of phrases from Homer: the 'port' might be English for all we are told of it.

But the persons? The figure of Saul, though a *muta persona*, is intensely dramatic. But David after the opening stanzas is less convincing than some of Browning's men and women: he becomes the mouthpiece of the poet's philosophy of life, and the attribution to him of a mature Christian belief is a bold anachronism. *Ulysses*, on the other hand, says nothing that an ancient Greek could not have said. Yet Tennyson's poem is more dramatic in form than in spirit. In its essence it is an allegory of the pursuit of knowledge. Both poems express some of their



authors' deepest feelings on life and death, and Browning as usual is the profounder and subtler thinker.

As to metrical technique, no one who learns either poem by heart is likely to weary of it. The 'vowelling' in *Ulysses* is superb and the music of *Saul* is glorious: lines we stumble over at first are discords which the master musician resolves into harmonies.

32. *What do you consider the best English metre for an epic poem? Give reasons for your choice.*

Metres that have been successfully used for English Epics are:

(1) *Blank verse*—the noblest of all our metres in Milton's hands, but the most difficult. In purely narrative passages it is apt to degenerate into a monotonous undistinguished prose cut up into lengths. A long epic cannot be continuously sustained at a great height of emotion: blank verse seldom satisfies when it has left the heights (e.g. in the pedestrian parts of *The Excursion* or *The Ring and the Book*).

(2) *The heroic rhymed couplet*—'staccato' and monotonous, with a tendency to frigid glitter of rhetorical antithesis, as practised by Dryden and Pope (the ideal metre for satire, burlesque, didactic poetry). Keats and W. Morris freed it from its drawbacks by varying the pauses, running the sense beyond the couplet and so reducing the rhyme to a pleasant and unemphatic musical accompaniment.

(3) *Rhymed couplets of a longer line* were used by Chapman in his translation of the *Iliad*: the line of seven feet is rather heavy and harsh. W. Morris's *Sigurd* has a splendid ring in battle-pieces:

'And dead he fell thrust backward and rang on the dead  
men's gear,  
And for a certain season durst no man draw anear,  
For 'twas e'en as a great god's slaying, and they feared  
the wrath of the sky,

But they thought their hearts might harden if awhile they should let him lie.'

The weakness is a tendency to fall into two lines at the caesura.

(4) *The Spenserian stanza*—Professor Saintsbury has finely called each stanza of the *Faerie Queene* 'a great stroke by a mighty swimmer' in 'the unbroken but wave-swept sea' of poetry. The Alexandrine saves the stanza from isolation, carries us on to the next stanza. The exacting rhymes tend to cause prolixity; but the stanza has great merits as used by Thomson, Keats, and Byron, and in Worsley's *Odyssey* and Musgrave's *Inferno*, as well as by Spenser.

(5) The English hexameter, however attractive in single lines or a short succession of lines, cannot be said to have justified itself on a large scale.

33. '*Extracts ! a pitiable method ! Young people have time to read long books and the imagination to seize all the great things*' (NAPOLEON). *Discuss this. Is there anything to be said in favour of Anthologies ?*

To rest one's acquaintance with the great writers merely on extracts is to cultivate superficiality, and must result in judgments formed on insufficient grounds if it does not end merely in indifference to literature. So, though still worse methods have been invented—e.g. the reading of abridgments in which the author's text is falsified, and the study of histories of literature with ready-made verdicts—Napoleon's condemnation is not too severe.

Notwithstanding this, anthologies may perform some valuable services. (1) As the world grows older, the practicability of reading all the authors that are worth reading diminishes: the choice is often not between reading something of an author and everything, but between reading something and nothing: and the skilful anthologist may guide us straight to the best things, and may

help to keep alive the great things occasionally to be found in the midst of inferior work. (2) Such collections as the *Greek Anthology* or the *Golden Treasury* are not books of 'extracts': each poem is a complete whole. (3) That the anthologist's own taste must be good is obviously essential. He should also have a good knowledge of what passages have won the admiration of admitted judges, and he should rely on that verdict of the world at least as much as on his own preferences. If these ideal conditions are fulfilled, the study of an anthology is a lesson in style which we cannot get in any other way. And if some passages inevitably lose by detachment from their context, it should be noted that many gain by the emphasis of separation or even by new surroundings. (The sequence of lyrics in the *Golden Treasury* often brings out their beauty by comparison or contrast.) (4) Finally, if the anthologist succeeds in his true purpose, he tempts us to explore for ourselves. 'He doth as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of grapes, that, full of that taste, you may long to pass further' (Sir P. Sidney). But if he has really put together many of the best things, we shall not wish to discard him; his book may remain a companion for hours when libraries are out of our reach.

34. 'The function of prose is to communicate ideas, not to adorn them.'

The main function of nine-tenths of prose is to communicate ideas, and therefore the supreme virtue of prose is *lucidity*. Most good qualities of prose are good as contributing to this end; but that end once secured, other merits are not to be despised.

Deliberately to aim at adorning ideas is seldom wise either in prose or in poetry; it is apt to produce a false rhetoric. In perfect composition the thought and the style are almost or quite inseparable—we no longer think of them as substance and form, the body and its dress. And the real difference between prose and poetry should lie in the nature of the ideas themselves more than in the



form. In poetry words themselves are 'raised to a higher power' (F. MYERS), because the poet has lifted us into a sphere beyond that for which the words were originally created.

At the same time it is true that some prose passages which are justly most famous are passages in which the author has been getting out of the words some of the effect more usual in poetry—moving us by beauty of sound and imagery and association. This is surely a legitimate triumph, though 'the middle style'—'familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious' (JOHNSON on ADDISON)—is what ordinary mortals should aim at.

35. *Why do languages decay? Is the English language decaying? If so, can anything be done to preserve it?*

Language is often likened to a plant or other organism with its seasons of growth, maturity, and decay. A language is always undergoing change, and some causes which tend to decay—e.g. human laziness, the desire for ease of articulation—are operative from the beginning: to mark their operation in our own time, therefore, would not be a conclusive proof of decay. But in studying the languages of the past we note how the men of genius made the language in the process of using it: by careful definition, by specialization of terms, they perfected it as an instrument of thought, by choice of beautiful words and associations they made their speech lovely. We note also how decay sets in when genius fails to continue this process, when literature seems to be striving after novelty rather than greater perfection, and how decay is hastened by a growing divergence between popular and literary speech.

There is no need to regard the English language as decaying because the splendid strength and richness of Elizabethan writers, the majesty combined with simplicity of the Authorized Version, or even the satisfying cadences of eighteenth-century prose, seem triumphs unattainable

now. Even if Pater and Stevenson composed in English as if it were a dead language, as has been alleged, no such charge could be brought against Ruskin, whose epoch is not yet remote. But there are grave dangers to be met : the continuous crop of new scientific and technical terms overweights the language and encourages the divergence between written and spoken speech : the material rewards of literature go to those who please the uneducated democracy, which is without a standard : the slang of two Anglo-Saxon hemispheres pours into newspapers and books, and by them is again disseminated. Something can assuredly be done by conscious effort. Language is not a mere natural growth. It has behind it the mind of man. The love of the best in literature, if it were more widely diffused, could effect wonders.

### III. LIFE AND EDUCATION

36. '*The impression we produce is some element in what we are*' (CREIGHTON). *Is it fair to speak of the impression we produce as a part of our character?*

1. We commonly and justly contrast Appearance with Reality ; and in a world of misunderstandings, wilful and unintentional, of righteous purposes frustrated whether by the malice of foes, the half-heartedness of allies, or his own imperfect powers, the good man appeals, like Rabbi Ben Ezra, from the judgment of man to the judgment of God, who will reckon at its true value

All, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account :  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's  
amount.

2. But the claim to be judged by motive, not by achievement, is not so simple a matter as we may have thought.



- (a) Do we *know* our own motives? Will God's verdict on them be the same as our own? The motives of good men are often more mixed than they allow to themselves.
- (b) The most admirable aspirations are of little value if they are never translated into external acts. It is possible for us to satisfy our conscience with noble sentiments of patriotism or humanity and all the while to be failing in some obvious duty.
- (c) The world's account of a good man may do him injustice, but even a hostile impression has generally some element of truth in it. So the witty Fool in *Twelfth Night* says he is 'the worse for his friends and the better for his foes.' 'My friends praise me and make an ass of me; my foes tell me truly that I am an ass; so that by my foes I profit in *knowledge of myself*.'
- (d) Manner is not something purely external, but part of ourselves; or if it is purely external, as when it is affected or insincere, it is still a part of us, and a lamentable part.

37. *The probable effect on character of modern inventions.*

We must not exaggerate the effect; the change in the outward aspect of the world is greater than any internal change; human nature, as literature shows us, is wonderfully the same in all ages. But there are certain characteristics of modern inventions that can hardly fail to affect character. (1) They have indefinitely increased *comforts*, conveniences, luxuries; and these things tend to increase softness and self-indulgence. (2) They have increased our *mobility*. This may produce a wider outlook on life, greater imagination and sympathy: in other cases it may merely mean greater hurry, less time for the development of a real personality and of the quieter virtues. (3) They bring the whole world nearer to our own doors. We hear—and even see—almost everything that happens. So we multiply the impressions made on us by external events, but decrease their intensity. Thus we run a danger of living in a rapid succession of superficial feelings. (Instead of 'taking our pleasures sadly' we may even take other people's disasters pleasurable!) (4) The specialization of



industry which has accompanied inventions increases the monotony of the worker's life, though this is partially compensated for by the variety of experiences open to him in his leisure. 'The world is too much with us.' If man is not to be the worse for the inventions by which he has multiplied his pleasures, it can only be by a steadfast refusal to become the slave of material things. (5) The increased pace of inventions since the Great War has made the economic outlook more difficult. The products of machinery are multiplied faster than mankind can absorb them, and at the same time men are condemned to idleness because machines dispense more and more with human service. Unless some adjustment can be reached, it looks as if man's mechanical inventions had become too strong for him and were producing idleness, unrest and consequent deterioration of character. It is true that in the high-powered car and aeroplane he has discovered a partial outlet for his unrest, but the palliative effects no cure: too often *crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops*.

38. *Ought Science to fill a larger place in English education?*

What should be the aims of education? To develop a man's faculties, bodily, mental, spiritual, fully and harmoniously; to train the reason, imagination, sympathies; to teach quickness, resourceful skill, patience, endurance; to train the memory and store it with thoughts valuable for later life—these are some of the aims; and we may test our progress in education (which should continue long after we have left school) by our proficiency or failure in these different directions. Obviously, no one study will supply all that we need: the specialist who prematurely narrows his interests suffers a grievous loss.

When English education is found wanting in 'Science,' two things may be meant and are sometimes confused. (1) It was the great achievement of the nineteenth century to apply 'scientific method' to all studies—history, literature, languages included. All these studies can, and

should, be pursued in this fashion ; and so pursued they furnish a far better mental training than they did before. (2) If by ' Science ' is meant ' Natural Science,' it may reasonably be urged that no education can be satisfactory which entirely leaves out modern discoveries about the world or the universe or modern inventions. But all argument should distinguish carefully between (a) the modicum which every well-educated person should know ; (b) the opportunities for further study which should be given to those whose tastes and talents lie in a scientific direction. As regards both (a) and (b), the claims of Natural Science are overwhelmingly strong. They should only not be pressed to the extent of ignoring the fact that other studies, properly pursued, furnish an equally rigid training in scientific method, or of denying the necessity of developing humane sympathies by the study of history and literature. Some study of these also should be required from all, not merely from the expert.

### 39. *Specialization.*

(a) The advantages are obvious—even to the meanest intelligence. Knowledge has become so vast and complex that it is no longer possible to know ' something of everything and everything of something.' Life is short, art long, competition keen. If we are to make our way in the world, it seems as if we must choose our course and stick to it, refusing to be tempted down side-tracks.

(b) (1) Yet we have only to define the specialist (as we often may, not unfairly) as ' ignorant of all subjects except one,' to realize how imperfect he is as a man and a citizen. And if we have ever had the good fortune to encounter a really great man at close quarters, what most has impressed us has probably been—not his grasp of his special subject, for of that we could not judge—but the width of his interests and sympathies, his power of entering into things that we expected to find wholly remote from him. Such breadth of vision and sympathy is only possible to one who has trained his mind to receive influences ' from art, from



nature and the schools.' It is a well-known truth that the best result of a university education is often not the skill of an expert in one study, but the alertness and adaptability of mind that are gained by contact with able men who represent different studies and different points of view.

(2) In many arts, businesses and professions the special training needed can be acquired far more quickly at a somewhat later stage by a man of well-trained general intelligence than by an immature student.

(3) A boy of sixteen has often not discovered his real aptitude, and in this case the premature choice of a special training may be a serious mistake. On the other hand, to have a definite goal in view gives to many natures an enthusiasm and a new power of work. In such cases, specialization may be best, though a wise specialist will certainly take some pains to prevent the undue narrowing of his outlook upon life by keeping alive some interests that do not directly bear upon the career he has chosen.

40. '*I thank God there are here no free schools nor printing*' (Governor of Virginia in 1671). *Discuss this view.*

A favourite doctrine of the early nineteenth century was the progress of humanity through popular education and the printing press. Tyranny rested upon ignorance; knowledge was power; all had a right to knowledge, and the possession of it would enable them to take their share in the coming government 'of the people by the people for the people.' [Cp. Leigh Hunt's *Apologue* in *Fiction and Matter of Fact*, and Tennyson's *Golden Year* :

'When wealth no more shall rest in mounded heaps. . . .  
Fly, happy, happy sails, and *bear the Press*. . . .']

The hopes that were entertained for humanity have been largely disappointed. Democracy is still on its trial as a form of government, and seems to some acute observers 'the cult of incompetence,' dominated by jealousy of any ability beyond the average. The Press can spread false-



hoods as well as truths, and can be the instrument of an unscrupulous despotism ; a little learning is a dangerous thing ; and even professors are not remarkable for sane judgment in politics. Again, much of the world's work is manual work ; and many agree with Ruskin in preferring a workman who can neither read nor write : book-knowledge is a poor substitute for the traditional lore and training of the cottage home.

But though we cannot say that either a man or a nation will always be the better for knowledge, every human being should surely be given every chance to make the best of himself. No class has a right to monopolize the good things of the world, of which education is one ; and if a class succeeds in establishing a monopoly in education it inevitably deteriorates. Moreover, an ignorant multitude is the greatest of national perils, whether political power is given to it or withheld. Even such elementary education as has been given in England has greatly diminished crime. We may reasonably criticize that education as having been too mechanical, and too much a matter of book-knowledge, but this is an argument for making education better, not for abolishing it.

41. *'Whatever makes the past, the distant or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings'* (JOHNSON). *Explain this, and illustrate its truth by examples.*

Like so many of Johnson's sayings, this expresses an obvious truth which we are apt to ignore in our common judgments. It does not merely mark the difference between men who 'look before and after' (*Hamlet*, and Shelley's *Skylark* Ode) and the animals who live entirely in the sensations of the moment ; it also gives us a standard by which to measure men and nations. The world measures by material standards, rank, power, wealth. We are enabled to set things at their true value by reflecting that the one power which distinguishes man from the animals, his 'god-like faculty,' provides quite another test. Judged

by this, Browning's 'Grammarian' was not a failure, though he had wholly missed the achievements that men prize.

The saying provides the best justification of a liberal education as opposed to 'vocational instruction.' The true aim of education is to widen our horizon by bringing the past (geology, archaeology, history, literature), the distant (other nations and countries, and even, through astronomy, other worlds), the future (philosophical, political and religious thought based on an enlightened study of the past) within our ken. This it is that 'advances us in the dignity of thinking beings' and delivers us from the petty tyranny of the present, the personal, the trivial. It is sadly possible to become expert in one branch of technical skill, or one way of money-getting, and remain a grovelling earth-worm.

42. '*The true University is a collection of books*' (CARLYLE). *How far can books fulfil the function of a University and where do they fail?*

Universities arose in Europe when books were few and costly, and to acquire learning it was necessary to go to the living teacher. Does the diffusion of books make the university no longer necessary? Such a theory seems to ignore (1) the value of the contact of living mind with mind—the influence of the teacher's personality, the stimulus of intellectual rivalry, discussion, companionship, (2) the value of organized study, which is assisted by learned societies, but best of all by a university, (3) the value of a national standard of learning, which can best be maintained by a university, (4) the growth of modern studies which depend on laboratories more than on books, (5) the service which university life may render as a training for the larger world: if it sometimes narrows the student who stays too long, it is at least wider than a man's own study.

The isolated student has difficulty in learning how best to use a library: he may lose years through lack of direction and criticism, through doing over again what has been done already.

## APPENDIX II

### *Essay-Questions*

#### I. ENGLISH LITERATURE

##### *A. Chaucer and his Times*

1. 'Eleven of the Pilgrims were in the service of the Church.' What impressions of the mediaeval Church do you get from the *Prologue*?

2. 'Langland's work is of first-rate value to social historians, but its literary merit is barely second-rate.' Discuss and illustrate both parts of this judgment.

3. 'The outstanding quality of his nature is his intense interest in all human life and knowledge.' Justify this praise of Chaucer from your own reading of his poetry.

4. Can a modern reader enjoy *The Clerkes Tale*?

5. 'In *The Nonnes Preestes Tale* Chaucer has taken a simple fable and enriched it with humour, philosophy, and learning.' Illustrate this enrichment from your remembrance of the Tale.

6. Which characters in the *Prologue* does Chaucer portray most sympathetically? Do you find satirical touches in any of his descriptions?

7. Compare and contrast Chaucer as a story-teller with Browning or Tennyson or Dickens.

8. 'Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago;  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day?'

Illustrate the truth of these lines as a description of the themes of old English ballads.



*B. Sixteenth Century*

1. Illustrate the imaginative power of Marlowe from the opening and closing scenes of *Dr. Faustus* and from the scene with Helen.

2. *Dr. Faustus* has been called 'the typically Renaissance rendering of a great story.' Distinguish the elements in the play which suggest the Middle Ages and the Renaissance respectively.

3. 'Neither the King nor the Queen is a consistent portrait.' Discuss this criticism of Marlowe's *Edward II*, and say what you find to be the merit of the play.

4. 'The time-honoured distinction of Tragedy and Comedy gives no true division of Shakespeare's plays.' Discuss this.

5. 'They are presented with a choice, and the essence of the tragedy is that choice is impossible.' Explain and illustrate this account of Shakespeare's tragic heroes.

6. Why did Shakespeare introduce 'Fools' into his plays? Compare and contrast Touchstone and the Fool in *King Lear*.

7. What is to be gathered from the plays of Shakespeare's schooldays and what he learnt at school?

8. 'We know the hero or heroine in prose romance far more familiarly than we know the hero or heroine of drama.' With Shakespeare and the great novelists in your mind, discuss this statement.

9. 'The real value of the Comedies is that they are revelations of the *universality* of Shakespeare's mind.' Explain and illustrate this.

10. Is Hamlet's self-accusation of indecision justified?

11. 'All the other characters help to elucidate Hamlet's and are chiefly interesting in their relations to him.' Discuss this.

12. How do Caliban, Ariel, and Ferdinand differ in their attitude towards 'service' and 'freedom'?

13. What differences (a) in diction, (b) in the handling of verse, (c) in outlook on life, are there between the earlier and later plays of Shakespeare?

14. 'Knowing nothing of local colour, Shakespeare still succeeds in representing the past.' Show that both parts of the sentence are true of *Coriolanus*.

15. 'Beatrice and Dogberry are at opposite poles of humorous creation.' Explain this, and show how Shakespeare uses them both in the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

16. What part does external Nature play in *King Lear*? Illustrate with the help of brief quotations.

17. 'Through all the adventures of the play Theseus and Hippolyta are never quite forgotten.' Show the truth of this account of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

18. How are the characters of the spirits in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contrasted with those of the 'human mortals'?

19. 'All other literature, whatever its beauty, seems monotonous after Shakespeare' (LEGOUIS). Try to give some notion of Shakespeare's variety.

20. Was Shakespeare on the side of Shylock?

21. Does Shakespeare in *Coriolanus* favour the patrians or the plebeians, or is he impartial?

22. How much did Macbeth and Lady Macbeth know of each other's character?

23. Discuss the motives of Cassius (in *Julius Caesar*) in the light of comments made by other characters.

24. 'Shakespeare's most profound thoughts are generally uttered by the most worthless characters.' How far is this true?

25. 'Shakespeare's first task as an artist (in *The Merchant of Venice*) was to distract attention from the absurdities of the plot' (QUILLER-COUCH). Discuss this criticism.

26. 'In Spenser the background is almost as important as the characters.' Illustrate this by recalling some of the scenes described in Book I of the *Faerie Queene*.

27. Is didactic poetry a mistake? Discuss this with special reference to the didactic elements in the *Faerie Queene* or in *Comus*.



28. 'Infinite in spectacular variety' (JUSSERAND). Illustrate this excellence of Spenser from Book V.

29. Is Shakespeare more to be admired in his songs or in his sonnets?

30. Some Elizabethan lyrics have been called 'wild spring-flowers,' others have been praised for 'ingenuity and artifice.' Can you select examples of both kinds from Book I of the *Golden Treasury*?

31. How would Sidney have criticized *Twelfth Night* and *Coriolanus*?

32. Compose a fragment of an imaginary voyage in an Elizabethan ship in the manner of Hakluyt.

33. 'Sharp observation of the humours or follies of contemporary mankind.' Illustrate this faculty in Jonson from *Every Man in his Humour*.

34. Discuss and illustrate Shakespeare's use of soliloquy.

35. 'No one in all Shakespeare so continually speaks the very greatest poetry' (J. C. BAILEY). Justify this account of Macbeth.

### C. Seventeenth Century

1. What were Bacon's ideas about statesmen and statesmanship? Illustrate from the *Essays*.

2. Dr. Johnson thought that the characters of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were 'not kept sufficiently apart.' How does Milton distinguish them, and how far does he succeed?

3. How did Milton imagine the personalities of Moloch, Belial, and Beelzebub? Show how their arguments reflect their characters.

4. What traces of Milton's Puritanism do you find in *Comus* and *Lycidas*? Do you find any Cavalier tastes and sympathies also?

5. For what reasons is the *Areopagitica* worth reading?

6. Describe the character of Satan as revealed in *Paradise Lost*, Books I and II, and quote Milton briefly in support of your view.

7. Illustrate the ways in which Bunyan makes his characters real people, not merely types in an allegory.



8. 'The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.' How far do the *Essays* confirm this estimate of Bacon? Justify it, or modify it, with the help of brief quotations.

9. 'Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart,  
 . . . and yet thy heart  
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.'

Illustrate both sentences from Milton's Sonnets.

10. 'The *lovely and learned* play of Milton's imagination.' Exemplify the force of both epithets from *Comus*.

11. 'Neither are the speeches nor the episode which follows natural to that dark dwelling. . . . There is no true horror or pain in Milton's hell.' Discuss this criticism.

12. What qualities have made Sir T. Browne a favourite with men of letters?

13. 'The influence of his great learning on Browne was an *imaginative* influence: it completed his outfit as a *poetic visionary*.' Explain and illustrate.

14. Compare Herrick and Marvell as lyric poets in subjects, metre, style, inspiration.

15. What qualities of a great novelist, and what other qualities, do you find in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*?

16. Illustrate from *Golden Treasury*, Book II, the manner in which seventeenth-century poets treated *two* of the following themes: the deaths of kings; ideal womanhood; the delights of meditation; the influence of music.

17. With only the Sonnets to guide us, what idea should we form of Milton's character, interests, and tastes?

18. If Herrick's and Vaughan's poetry had been lost, which loss would have been the greater?

19. How far was Nature important to the lyric poets of the seventeenth century?

20. Do you find the *Areopagitica* or the *Religio Medici* more readable? Give your reasons.

21. Dryden claimed to have devoted himself to the improvement of English poetry. What are the merits of his poems?

*D. Eighteenth Century*

1. Compare *The Memoirs of a Cavalier* with any modern novel of adventure that you have read.
2. Describe a meeting with Sir Roger at his club—in Addison's manner, as far as you can imitate it.
3. 'Eighteenth-century literature, as a whole, is a literature of London. The exceptions, though famous, are few.' Illustrate the rule and the exceptions.
4. How far do you find a feeling for Nature in the poetry of Goldsmith and Gray?
5. 'What interests us most now in *The Traveller* is its descriptive and personal side' (A. DOBSON). Illustrate this. What side was of more interest to Goldsmith's century than to our own?
6. 'The English of his youth was the English of the *Areopagitica*; he saw it become the English of the *Spectator* and of Swift' (*The Times* on Sir Christopher Wren). Try to describe the difference between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prose.
7. Are Pope's *Epistles* poetry? What are their claims to admiration?
8. Compare Pope as a social satirist with Steele and Addison.
9. How does eighteenth-century comedy differ most from Shakespearian? Illustrate from Goldsmith and Sheridan.
10. 'Goldsmith excels in humour, Sheridan in wit.' Explain and illustrate this.
11. 'Throughout it is the Vicar's character that makes the charm of Goldsmith's story.' Discuss this judgment.
12. Compare and contrast the attitude of Swift and Addison towards the English social and political life of their day.
13. 'In his lifetime Johnson was chiefly thought of as a great writer: to-day we think of him chiefly as a great man.' Can you account for this change of view?
14. Have the *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* any application to the politics of the present day?

15. Why is *The Rape of the Lock* called a 'mock-heroic' poem? Show, with the help of quotation, the force of both parts of the epithet.

16. 'In all Gray's *Odes* there is a cumbrous splendour which we wish away. . . . The images are magnified by affectation, the language is laboured into harshness.' Is Johnson's censure just? Is there any answer to it?

17. Sketch two of the following types as described by eighteenth-century essayists: the country squire, the critic, the connoisseur, the man-about-town.

18. Compare Frances Burney with *either* Jane Austen *or* Goldsmith *or* Sheridan in the portrayal of English domestic life.

19. With the help of *The Village*, try to define Crabbe's special place and function in English poetry.

20. 'His seeing eye and gentle heart are imaged in it.' Justify this description of White's *Selborne*.

21. How far is it right to look upon the eighteenth century in England as an unpoetical period?

22. What do Cowper's letters tell you of the things and people that interested him?

23. 'A passion for structure and finish, for proportion, economy, and unity.' Illustrate some or all of these qualities from Gray's poetry.

24. 'Addison and Steele created one new type in literature, and partly laid the foundations for another.' Say exactly how far we owe to them the English essay and novel.

25. 'You will find everywhere the strongest marks of an individual mind' (RALEIGH on Johnson). Illustrate this from Johnson's writings.

26. '*The Passions*, the most popular, is the least poetical of Collins's odes.' Discuss this criticism.

27. What are the chief advantages and disadvantages of the use of dialect in poetry? Illustrate from the case of Burns.



*E. Nineteenth Century*

1. How far would it be just to contrast Landor and Hazlitt as the Aristocrat and the Bohemian of literature?
2. Is Lamb or Landor the greater writer of English prose?
3. Compare Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, as poets of birds.
4. Compare Keats as a story-teller with Wordsworth.
5. 'The plan permitted of a variety hitherto unknown in fiction.' What different elements of interest are mingled in *Waverley*?
6. Show that there is true poetry, and not merely rhetoric, in *Childe Harold*, Book IV.
7. 'The characters which ostensibly play the chief part serve merely to introduce us to the subordinate actors.' How far is this true of *Guy Mannering*?
8. What philosophy of life is expressed or implied in the odes of Keats?
9. Does Keats attract you most in his sonnets, his odes, or his longer poems?
10. 'The distinction between poets and prose-writers is a vulgar error.' State and criticize the grounds on which Shelley bases this assertion.
11. It has been said that Jane Austen shows deeper insight into women than into men. Discuss this in connexion with *Pride and Prejudice*.
12. What do you consider the highest excellence of Shelley's poetry, and what, if any, its greatest lack?
13. Wordsworth said of his poems that 'the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action, and not the action and situation to the feeling.' Illustrate this from Wordsworth's poetry.
14. Compare Shelley and Keats in their use of (a) epithets, (b) imagery.
15. 'That willing suspension of disbelief that constitutes poetic faith.' How does Coleridge obtain this in *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*?

16. 'Hazlitt is always a young man.' In what favourable sense is this true? Illustrate by some of his judgments and likings.

17. Compare *The Lady of Shalott* with a dramatic lyric by Browning, bringing out the contrast between the two poets.

18. What did Carlyle think the nineteenth century could learn from the twelfth? Discuss the value of his argument.

19. 'The chief preoccupation of Ruskin's first forty years was with nature, with pictures, with architecture.' In which of these three connexions has he made most impression on you? Illustrate from your recollections of his writings.

20. Arnold's poetry is sometimes called 'melancholy.' Is this a defect in it? Illustrate from your reading of his poems.

21. 'The great English caste-system and its caste-sentiment.' What impression of this do you get from *Vanity Fair*, and what is Thackeray's own attitude towards it?

22. 'Pictures bathed in a soft and tender atmosphere.' Illustrate the applicability of this description to Tennyson's poetry.

23. Compare and contrast the attitude towards life of Browning and Matthew Arnold.

24. Does *Sohrab and Rustum* or *Morte D'Arthur* come nearer to your ideal of epic poetry?

25. Has the novel advanced or degenerated since Dickens and Thackeray?

26. 'People have said that Dickens is not like life. Life, however, has a constant habit of being like Dickens.' Discuss this with reference to *David Copperfield*.

27. It has been said that the true hero of *Evan Harrington* is dead before the tale opens. Do you agree?

28. 'An idea is always somewhere in everything Browning wrote' (W. STEBBING). What special 'ideas' do you find in any poems of his that you admire?

29. What do the first *Locksley Hall* and *The Scholar Gipsy* tell you of the Victorian Age?

30. 'In an age when romanticism was in full flood Landor kept steadily before him the ideals and the temper of classical art.' Explain what is meant, and contrast Landor in this respect with any other leading Victorian writer.

31. 'No woman novelist has ever succeeded in giving a true portrait of a man.' Is this a true criticism of Jane Austen, George Eliot, or Charlotte Brontë?

32. Illustrate some of the ways in which post-Victorian lyrical poetry has enriched our appreciation of (a) the sea, (b) the countryside, (c) open-air life.

33. Compare and contrast the short story of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

## II. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the use of inventing an ideal commonwealth or 'Utopia'? Illustrate your answer by reference to any famous example.

2. Is the greatness of a drama judged best in the study or in the theatre?

3. The past, present, and future of Constantinople.

4. How far is greatness of subject necessary to a great poem or a great picture?

5. The influence of the sea on English life and character.

6. Have machinery and the increase of material wealth increased the happiness of life?

7. What functions can a monarchy discharge in a democratic constitution? Is it worth retaining?

8. Tolerance in private and public life.

9. Does a novel or a biography give more valuable guidance for life?

10. Hobbes described the life of primitive, as distinguished from that of civilized, man as 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.' Discuss this view.



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11. 'My country, right or wrong.' Is this maxim morally sound?

12. 'Newspapers are a public danger, because they profess to guide popular opinion and really live by expressing the opinions that are popular.' Explain and discuss.

13. 'Paradox is usually the talent of the superficial, the perverse, and the obstinate' (LANDOR). Discuss this.

14. 'In travelling, a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge' (JOHNSON). Explain, and illustrate from some place or places that you have visited.

15. 'Opera is bad art, for it spoils two arts.' Discuss this.

16. Why is the English language so rich in synonyms? Illustrate their usefulness by a few examples.

17. What is meant by 'impassioned prose'? Why is it said to be dangerous? What writers have practised it with success?

18. What are the uses of quotation in a prose essay? When does quotation become a blemish of style?

19. 'The needs of business are best met by a liberal education.' Discuss this.

20. 'The present age has mistaken comfort for civilization.' What is the difference between the two?

21. Are Polar expeditions and Mount Everest expeditions worth while?

22. 'Rhyme is a thing to all judicious ears trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings' (MILTON). Discuss this doctrine.

23. 'All good poems begin well.' Illustrate this.

24. What is meant by 'the pastoral convention' in poetry? Illustrate it, and discuss its poetic value.

25. In deciding whether a given piece of blank verse was written by Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, or Browning, what indications would you look out for?

26. Is 'free verse' an artistic advance or a degeneration of the poetic art?

27. Are 'good manners' a convention, or something more?

28. 'Great doers are also great talkers' (Mr. LLOYD GEORGE). Is this true?

29. Is it a compliment to a man to say 'he talks like a book'? If not, why not?

30. Do you think that a work of art should necessarily appeal to 'the man in the street'?

31. 'The best music is not cumbered with a subject at all; it floats in air.' Discuss this with the help of examples.

32. 'In its lack of variety classic architecture contrasts strongly with that of the Middle Ages.' Discuss this.

33. How far is consistency a virtue? Support your view from characters in history or fiction.

34. Discuss the claims of labour to the control of industry.

35. 'The defect of the present system which touches the wage-earner on the raw is that under it he is industrially only a machine.' Explain this, and discuss any possible remedies.

36. 'Let us take care not to write too well. It is the worst manner of writing that there is' (ANATOLE FRANCE). Discuss this.

37. What evidence can be derived from history as to the strong and weak points of small States?

38. 'Music is a progressive art; it is bound by the laws of its being to follow new paths' (HADOW). Illustrate this from what you know of the history of music.

39. What is 'genre' painting? Give a brief account of some famous examples.

40. 'A modern builder should simply consider modern needs: he is not concerned with the past.'

'Architecture is an art with its own tradition which cannot be defied with impunity.'

Which of these quotations represents the truer view?

41. 'Life in all its many phases comes within the essayist's range.' Illustrate this from your own reading.

42. Are the works of Nature or the works of Man more interesting ?

43. Describe with some critical remarks any *two* dramatic situations in literature (not necessarily drama) that have specially impressed you.

44. Describe, from experience or imagination, an ideal public library.

45. If you were given free choice of a holiday abroad, which country would you choose to travel in, and why ?

46. Has Scotland or Ireland contributed more to English literature ?

47. Disarmament as a practical policy.

48. Famous persons you would like to have met.

49. Is a dictatorship a good form of government ?

50. 'English tragedy is primarily an entertainment, Greek a religious ritual' (GILBERT MURRAY). What were some of the consequences of this difference in origin and aim ?

51. 'Do not let others choose your pleasures for you.' When and why is this counsel worth remembering ?

52. Modern Journalism has been called 'a branch of commerce,' and this has been said to be 'the most contemptible view of Journalism yet given to the world.' Discuss these two opinions, and give your own.

53. On what grounds can the State claim the life and property of its citizens, and are there any limits to its claim ?

54. 'That mark of a superior mind, that it must have a theory' (BRYCE). Explain and discuss.

55. 'The heart sees further than the head.' Explain this, and show that the insight given by the heart is important in literature as well as in life.



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